Writing women: The women's pages of the Malay-language press, 1987-1998

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Abstract

This thesis investigates depictions of Malay-Muslim women in two Malay-language newspapers, contrasting the portrayals on the women's pages with how women were depicted on the "malestream" leader and religion pages. I ask why these portrayals were different, paying attention to the political function of the various pages and the relationship of their writers to the keystone party (Umno) of the ruling coalition. The thesis also investigates differences and similarities between the women's pages of the two newspapers, *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian*.

Using a combination of oral histories with 21 women journalists who worked in various sections of the papers, and content analysis of around 8,000 articles, this thesis asks how the women journalists in the women's page interpreted news values in Malay-language newspaper newsrooms. I further contrast the construction of the "Malay-Muslim woman" in the women's pages with the hegemonic construction by the ruling party and in the leader and religion pages.

The period I examine falls in the calm between two political storms, 1987's *Operasi Lallang* and 1998's *Reformasi*. During this period, journalists in the Malay-language press saw themselves as largely free, operating within parameters defined not by legislation, but by Asian values and developmental discourse. Writers in the Malay-language press said that a they supported the government primarily because they, like many Malaysians in this era, felt that ruling coalition served the nation's best interest, rather than due to the extensive legal

constraints on the press. Yet, below this apparently monolithic surface, editors and journalists vied for resources and prestige. In this contest, I found that the women journalists of the women's pages often saw themselves as pitted against the malestream editorial hierarchy and marginalised in relation to their colleagues.

This thesis contributes to the field of feminist media history by examining how gendered newsroom practices in an authoritarian state paradoxically allowed marginalised women's page journalists greater political and editorial freedom than their malestream colleagues. With the women's pages perceived as an apolitical space, women journalists were able to engage in investigative journalism and discuss issues that were considered outside the realm of party politics. Further, women page journalists perceived their role differently from malestream journalists, defining their role in terms of the reader, rather than the government. One unexpected result of these greater freedoms was that women's page journalists were more likely to report censorship than their malestream colleagues writing about politics and economics.

Thus, this thesis finds that the women's page journalists drew upon multiple resources, including constructs of professionalism, Islamic values and reader loyalty to support their attempts to engage in stories that the malestream hierarchy opposed. While they supported the ruling coalition, because the editorial hierarchy, like the political hierarchy, positioned women outside party political contests, women journalists writing for the women's pages could write stories that advocated a greater public role for women, though this freedom was contingent upon the external political environment.

I declare that:

- this thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy;
- due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used; and
- the thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

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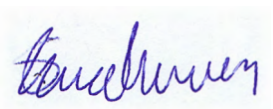
Signature: 

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Contents

Introduction.....1
Thesis aims and significance.....6
The Malaysian context.....10
Neoliberalism and the construction of the *Melayu Baru*.....19
Malaysia: An authoritarian state?.....23
Chapter outline.....25
Chapter One: The Malaysian media landscape.....27
Formal constraints on the newspapers and their journalists.....28
The multi-lingual print landscape and its implications.....32
Media and hegemony: The framing of women.....34
Professionalisation, newsroom culture, and development journalism as gendered constraints.....37
Hegemony, women journalists and the women's/ lifestyle pages.....44
Conclusion.....48
Chapter Two: Challenging and constructing hegemony in the newsrooms, a methodology.....50
Textual analysis: Feminist media studies and critical discourse analysis.....52
Oral histories.....54
My respondents.....56
The questions.....61
Conclusion.....66
Chapter Three: Women in the newsrooms: Their perceptions and stories.....67
Women journalists in male papers.....68
The glass ceiling, promotions and pay.....71
The newsroom culture.....79
Malestream journalists and women on the margins.....82
Writing on the margins.....83
Ethics as constraint and opportunity.....88
Conclusion.....96
Chapter Four: Evolving constructions of the Malay-Muslim woman in Utusan Malaysia.....98
Utusan's leader page: Writing the Umno model.....100
Men writing the Melayu Baru.....101
Writing women in Utusan's *leader page*.....108
Comparing the construction of women in the advice columns in the women's and religion pages.....115
The women's page of *Utusan*.....122
Di celah-celah kehidupan.....122
The entrepreneur and the deserving poor in the Wanita *pages*.....127
The neoliberal self in the Malay-language papers: Contrasting the leader and women's pages

……136
Conclusion……137
Chapter Five: The different voices of women in *Berita Harian* 140
Neoliberalism in *Berita Harian*……142
The female Melayu Baru *in* BH……147
Women as bearers of culture……153
Islam under threat and the role of women as protectors of culture……155
The 'pesta seks' *in Kedah*……165
Writing outside the hierarchy: The women's desk of *Berita Harian*……167
Creating feminist spaces through Berita Wanita……168
Shrinking spaces: The women's desk during the Asian financial crisis……175
Conclusion……178
Chapter Six: Umno, editors and the women's page journalists 180
Writing for women: Contrasting women's page and malestream journalists……181
Constraints on women's page journalists in *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia* ……188
Agency, paradox and Islam……195
Dutiful daughters, enforcers of morality………195
Women as wives: Insecurity, dependence and institutional inadequacy……197
Gejala sosial and the bad mother……198
Islam as the answer……200
Conclusion……201
Conclusion 203
Importance of the findings……207
Limitations of the research……208
Conclusion……209
Bibliography 210
Appendix A: Plain Language Statement 247
Appendix B: Brief biographies of oral history respondents (in alphabetical order) 248

List of tables

Table 4-1	No. and type of *Utusan* articles analysed, by year	99
Table 4-2	Breakdown of *Wanita* articles for October 1987	127
Table 5-1	Articles analysed by article type, excluding front page articles and wire pieces.	141
Table 5-2	Data from a report by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, Analysis of Adex Size and Trend in Malaysia (2006)	163
Table 6-1	%ge columns in *Wanita* by byline type from March 1993-June 1996	186

List of figures

Figure 4-1	Cartoon by 'Nan' on fatwa on girls playing netball	110
Figure 4-2	Cartoon illustrating a column by Maimunah Yusof	126
Figure 5-1	Cartoon by 'Zoy' illustrating racial stereotyping	146
Figure 5-2	Front page of *Berita Wanita*, 17 March 1998	151
Figure 5-3	Cartoon by 'Zoy' illustrating women talking nonsense	154
Figure 5-4	Article on wedding dresses, 4 March 1995	161
Figure 5-5	Editorial team in January 1996	168
Figure 5-6	Editorial team in March 1998	177

Glossary and notes on usage

In this thesis, I have followed standardised Malay spelling for words in *Bahasa*, except in quotes where I have followed the original spelling. If in doubt, I have followed the *Kamus Dewan* (3rd Edition) published by the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*. In Malay, repeating a noun indicates the plural. Until the early 1990s, this was often rendered with the number 2 at the end of the word, e.g. *kanak* is child, *kanak2* children. In terms of acronyms, I have remained true to my journalistic roots, capitalising those whose acronym is pronounced as letters, such as DAP, and capitalising just the first letter of those pronounced as words, such as Umno. In either case, the first use of the word provides the full designation.

I have followed local usage of names, but have in general omitted titles, except in cases where this may have led to confusion, such as Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah. Omitting titles in these instances would render the well-known personalities anonymous. Thus Dr Mahathir Mohamad is Mahathir Mohamad on first use, and Mahathir on subsequent uses. Similarly with place names, I have chosen the local usage, such as Melaka, over constructions such as Malacca.

Also, to note, I have followed the punctuation that appeared in newspaper article titles, which sometimes appears anachronistic, particularly in the use of quotation marks. I found it interesting when headlines were rendered as quotes, and when not, and thought that the reader may do likewise.

Lastly, some clarification of terms associated with newspapers. I have chosen to use the terms “leader page” for the page where the main opinion and editorial features are run, and the “leader article” for the article, without byline, published to represent the views of the newspaper. The desk refers to the group of journalists working on producing news for a specific part of the paper.

Glossary/ Acronyms

Abim: *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia*, Malaysian Islamic Youth Organisation, a leading *dakwah* organisation, led by Anwar Ibrahim until 1982.

Al-Arqam: See Darul Arqam.

Bernama: The Malaysian national news agency.

BN: *Barisan Nasional* or National Front, a coalition of primarily race-based parties that formed government throughout this period, and who have been in power since Independence. Formerly the Alliance.

Bumiputera: literally 'sons of the soil', a term that refers to those entitled to special privileges due to their assumed indigenous ancestry. The term includes those identified as Malay, Orang Asli and Orang Asal. Also spelt *bumiputra*.

Dakwah: literally 'to call', an Arabic term used in this thesis to refer to the various non-government movements driving processes of Islamisation.

DAP: Democratic Action Party, a Chinese-based opposition party, officially advocating socialism, though increasingly seen as pro-business. Originally an offshoot of Lee Kuan Yew's People's Action Party in Singapore.

Darul Arqam: A leading *dakwah* organisation that advocated a return to a Utopian Islam, practising seclusion of women and economic self-sufficiency of Muslims. Helped to cultivate Islamic businesses, until a government clamp-down in 1994. Led by Ashaari Mohammad, also known as Al-Arqam.

DCCK: *Di celah-celah kehidupan*, Life's nooks and crannies. A weekly column published in *Utusan Malaysia* throughout the period, written by veteran journalist Maimunah Yusof.

Dewan Muslimat Pas: The women's wing of the Islamist party Pas.

DVA: Domestic Violence Act (1994).

ISA: Internal Security Act (1960).

Kampung: Village.

MCA: A Chinese-based party, the Malaysian Chinese Association, and a major partner in the ruling coalition.

Melayu Baru: The 'New Malay', perceived to be an independent, entrepreneurial (male) individual who retained ties to culture and religion.

MIC: The Malaysian Indian Congress, an Indian-based component party of the *Barisan Nasional*.

NEP: The New Economic Policy, measures introduced following the race-based violence of 1969, primarily consisting of affirmative action for those identified as *bumiputera*.

NUJ: The National Union of Journalists (Malaysia).

Operasi Lallang: Literally Operation Weeds, a government crackdown in October 1987 primarily targeting civil society activists and opposition politicians.

Pas: An Islamist opposition party, the acronym comes from the Arabic for *Parti Islam Se-Malaysia*, the Malaysian Islamic Party.

PPPA: Printing Presses and Publications Act (1984).

Reformasi: A movement post-1998 to reform government, targeting corruption and transparency and the ousting of Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad. The name was drawn from the Indonesian movement that toppled Suharto.

Semangat 46: A Malay-based opposition party that formed following the dissolution of Umno in 1988 and headed by Tengku Razaleigh, a former contender for the Umno presidency. Dissolved in 1946, with the majority of its members rejoining Umno.

SJA: *Soal Jawab Agama*. An advice column of the same name was published in both papers. Although it appeared under various names in *Berita Harian*, I have used the same acronym throughout as the writer and the format remained unchanged.

Ulama: Religious scholars, a word of Arabic origin, single *alim*.

Ummah: The global community of Muslims, a word of Arabic origin.

Umno/ Umno Baru: The United Malays National Organisation and the 'New' Umno, the keystone Malay-based political party for the ruling *Barisan Nasional* coalition. The party became Umno Baru in 1988 following a court ruling that disbanded the original party.

Utusan Melayu: The Jawi-script predecessor to *Utusan Malaysia*, published as a weekly edition through most of this period.

***Wanita* Umno**: The women's wing of the Umno, comprising around half the membership.

WAO: Women's Aid Organisation, a women's rights and welfare organisation.

Introduction

> Media in Malaysia, we are free somehow, as a writer. I became a political writer in 1995, we are never told what to do, what not to do, never, because I'm a very independent body. But we know what to write, what not to write. Because it is stupid of you to go against the current.
>
> - Jamhariah Jaafar (*Berita Harian* 1987-2003)[1]

> …you are so scared, you tend to be censoring yourself. I don't have any conflict between this and my honesty, perhaps I was quite vocal and they know how I stand. I push things to the limit…
>
> - Zaharani Asran (*Utusan Malaysia* 1973-2004)[2]

Working in the politics and sports pages of the Malay-language newspaper *Berita Harian* (*BH*), Malay-Muslim woman journalist Jamhariah Jaafar claimed Malaysian journalists were "free". So too did her peer Zaharani Asran, working in the women's and court pages of rival *Utusan Malaysia* (*Utusan*). Yet the above quotes show differences in the exercise of this "freedom." Jamhariah found that she faced no censorship, because she knew "what to write." Zaharani, in contrast, pushed against the restrictions, despite attempts to restrain her, and against the fear she mentioned. Her quote shows that Malaysian women journalists, particularly those working on the women's pages were more than place-holders for the regime and its ideals of what women should be. This thesis compares the women's pages with the "malestream" pages of the Malay-language press between 1987 and 1998, focusing on the portrayal of women and the experiences of women journalists. I examine how women journalists embedded in the authoritarian system, but on the margins of that system, constructed divergent representations of women. Through interviews with women journalists in these newspapers and critical discourse analysis of the leader, religion and women's pages, this thesis asks whether and how marginalised journalists deviated from the official narrative despite their own support for the lead party of the ruling coalition, the United Malays National Organisation (Umno). Thus, by contrasting how the idealised "Malay woman" was formed in the leader, religion and women's pages, with a focus on the latter, and looking at how this formation changed over time, this thesis investigates

[1] Jamhariah Jaafar, interviewed 27 March 2014, Bangsar.
[2] Zaharani Asran, interviewed 27 February 2014, Kuala Lumpur.

whether an alternative portrayal of women, not directed by the authoritarian regime, could occur in the women's pages, despite these pages being part of the machinery of government.

My thesis asserts that, at the margins of the newspapers, Malay-identifying, Muslim women were portrayed with minimal reference to a party political agenda. Contradictions between the domestic policies of Islamisation and neoliberalism, explored further below, were visible in these pages and difficult to reconcile with both the official answer proposed by the Umno, which was Islamically inflected development (explored later); and with the answer proposed in the editorial and religious (the malestream) pages of the newspaper, which was remaining in the domestic sphere.[3] The answers journalists provided in the women's pages gave alternatives to the Umno's unidimensional vision of women's role in society. The women's pages primarily suggested greater piety and prayer would address the negative impacts that development had on women's lives, suggestions that would, as explored later, be in line with the Islamic *dakwah* (proselytisaion) movements. The pages, however, undermined this reading by their attention to the complexity of women's lives and the need for financial independence.

In the late 1980s, Malaysia suffered an economic crisis. Graduate unemployment, inconceivable a decade earlier, was considered a problem.[4] Corruption scandals plagued the administration, and there was unrest in the ranks of the Umno.[5] Outside the party, the appointment of non-Mandarin speaking heads in Chinese-language schools and the proposed "development" of the heritage Bukit Cina (Chinese Hill) site combined to make the Chinese-identifying population in Malaysia (around 27% of the population in 1991[6]) feel sidelined.[7] Logging in the East Malaysian state of Sarawak, in particular,

[3] In this thesis, I use Malay and Malay-identifying interchangeably. Malay signifies a racial category, which is problematic because it implies an unchanging, essential identity, thus I prefer the term Malay-identifying, but for readability have used Malay more frequently.

[4] Unemployment was evident in newspaper coverage, see e.g. Naziruddin Abdullah, "Pengangguran: Birokrasi Antara Puncanya (Unemployment: Bureaucracy among the Causes)," *Berita Harian*, 14 October 1987, 10; A. Kadir Jasin, "Siswazah Menganggur Menjadi Harimau (Unemployed Graduates Become Tigers)," *Berita Harian*, 5 October 1987, 10; K. Suthakar, "Mahu Gaji Kurang Atau Penganggur (Want Lower Salary or Unemployment)," *Berita Harian*, 1 December 1987, 10. See also Mahathir Mohamad, "Sempena Menyambut Maal Hijrah 1408 (Maal Hijrah 1408 Address)," Prime Minister's Office.¶9; Khong Kim Hoong, "Malaysia 1990: The Election Show-Down," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (1991), 62.

[5] See RS Milne, "Levels of Corruption in Malaysia: A Comment on the Case of Bumiputra Malaysia Finance," *Asian Journal of Public Administration* 9, no. 1 (1987), 56-73. For details on the extent of the political involvement in the economy, which fed unease, see Edmund Terence Gomez, *Politics in Business: Umno's Corporate Investments* (Kuala Lumpur: Forum, 1990). Also Diane K. Mauzy, "Malaysia in 1987: Decline of 'The Malay Way'," *Asian Survey* 28, no. 2 (1988), 213-22.

[6] "Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000)," ed. Economic Planning Unit (Kuala Lumpur: Economic Planning Unit, 1996), 105.

[7] A summary of the politics of Chinese-Malaysian dominated parties (1974-1988) is given in Yeap Soon Beng, "The Chinese in Malaysia: Politics of a Troubled Identity" (University of Hawai'i, 1992), 223-40.

was fuelling an environmentalist movement, along with more localised concerns such as the siting of a rare earth dump.[8]

The period this thesis examines begins on 1 October 1987: On 27 October, English-language newspaper *The Star* ran 19 mugshots on its front page, people who had been detained without trial under the notorious Internal Security Act. *Operasi Lallang,* Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's (1981-2003) response to the tensions above, had begun. Those arrested included opposition and government politicians; environmental, religious and educational activists; and academics. The following day *The Star* was closed down, along with Chinese-language paper *Sin Chew Jit Poh* and the Malay-language weekly *Watan. Operasi Lallang* was devastating for the press in Malaysia, not only for these journalists directly affected, but for those who watched their colleagues struggle, financially and morally, with the consequences of the closures.[9] Malay-language journalists in *BH* and *Utusan* were colleagues and friends of those who turned to taxi-driving, hawker-stalls and cleaning to make ends meet.[10]

Operasi Lallang thus impacted beyond those organisations or movements whose members were detained. By weakening other non-party political organisations, it strengthened the *dakwah* (Islamisation) movements: The state intervened in the affairs of Muslim groups tentatively, unless they were perceived as an imminent threat to stability.[11] In the past, particularly the 1985 raid in Memali (a raid on a Pas-linked Islamic sect which left 18 people dead), intervention had had politically

[8] See Mika Ichihara and Andrew Harding, "Human Rights, the Environment and Radioactive Waste: A Study of the Asian Rare Earth Case in Malaysia," *Review of European Community & International Environmental Law* 4, no. 1 (1995), 1-14; Jomo Kwame Sundaram, "Malaysia's Politicized Environment," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 3, no. 3 (1992), 3-7.

[9] This is primarily from personal observation, working sporadically in newsrooms and as a journalist from 1992 until 2007. See also Clare L. Boulanger, "Government and Press in Malaysia," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, no. 1-2 (1993): 54-5; Mustafa K. Anuar, "Defining Democratic Discourses: The Mainstream Press," in *Democracy in Malaysia: Discourses and Practices*, ed. Francis Kok Wah Loh and Khoo Boo Teik (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2002), 149-61.

[10] From anecdotes shared by Star reporters on the blog of a former journalist, https://uppercaise.wordpress.com/?s=lalang; accessed 9 December 2012

[11] During this period, the major crackdowns occurred on Shia Muslims and on the Darul al-Arqam group, Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Inter-Movement Tension among Resurgent Muslims in Malaysia: Response to the State Clampdown on Darul Arqam in 1994," *Asian Studies Review* 27, no. 3 (2003): 364-67; Maila Stivens, "Sex, Gender and the Making of the New Malay Middle Class," in *Gender and Power in Affluent Asia*, ed. Krishna Sen and Maila Stivens (London: Routledge, 1998), 87-8; Mohd Faizal Musa and tan beng hui, "State-Backed Discrimination against Shia Muslims in Malaysia," *Critical Asian Studies* 49, no. 3 (2017): 313-15. C.f. how al-Arqam still operates on the fringes of society in Johan Fischer, *Proper Islamic Consumption: Shopping among the Malays in Modern Malaysia* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2008), 1-4.

ambivalent results.[12] As historian Farish A. Noor has argued, the Memali incident helped strengthen bonds within the Islamist party Pas (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, known by its Jawi acronym), allowing them to tap into the global discourse of the martyred Muslim fighting against their own post-colonial government.[13] Thus, the government's main strategy was incorporation. Simultaneously, the government was continuing to act against left-wing and other NGO movements. Thus, the safest means of debating state actions, including on poverty and foreign policy, was through religiously based organisations.[14] Malaysia was not unique, as Holger Albrecht and Eva Wegner show in their comparative article on the Islamic oppositions in Morocco and Egypt.[15] *Operasi Lallang* therefore marks the start of this research because it represents a pivotal moment in shaping the Malaysian media, NGOs and the *dakwah* movement.[16]

Nonetheless, at the 1990 General Election, Umno and its partners in the *BN* coalition managed to hold on to their two-thirds majority.[17] While electoral shifts took place, particularly at the state level, the parties in opposition failed to persuade voters, particularly Malay voters, to move away from the trusted *BN* model:[18] The opposition's attempt to replicate this model failed.[19]

[12] Farish A. Noor, "Blood, Sweat and *Jihad*: The Radicalization of the Political Discourse of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (Pas) from 1982 Onwards," in *Islam in Southeast Asia*, ed. Joseph Chinyong Liow and Nadirsyah Hosen (London: Routledge, 2010), 86.
[13] Farish A. Noor, *Islam Embedded: The Historical Development of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party Pas, 1951-2003* (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 2004), 396-406, 35-36.
[14] This point is made in Chandra Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia* (Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti Sdn. Bhd., 1986), 37-9. A former journalist also explored the impact of Islamic rhetoric on foreign policy, see Karminder Singh Dhillon, "Malaysian Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Era, 1981-2003" (Boston University, 2005), esp. 338-69.
[15] Holger Albrecht and Eva Wegner, "Autocrats and Islamists: Contenders and Containment in Egypt and Morocco," *Journal of North African Studies* 11, no. 2 (2006): 125-27.
[16] See also Hwang In-Won, "Authoritarianism and Umno's Factional Conflicts," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 32, no. 2 (2002): 207-8; Julian C. H. Lee, "The Fruits of Weeds: Taking Justice at the Commemoration of the Twentieth Anniversary of *Operasi Lalang* in Malaysia," *Round Table* 97, no. 397 (2008): 608-9; Kua Kia Soong, *445 Days under Operation Lalang* (Kuala Lumpur: Oriengroup, 1999; repr., Second), 1-7.
[17] William Case, "Semi-Democracy in Malaysia: Withstanding the Pressures for Regime Change," *Pacific Affairs* 66, no. 2 (1993): 198-9; Khong, "Malaysia 1990," 168.
[18] See Khong Kim Hoong, *Malaysia's General Election 1990: Continuity, Change, and Ethnic Politics*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1991), 15-20.
[19] Some commentators even saw little difference between the two parties, seeing the split as primarily a personality clash, e.g. Harold Crouch, "Authoritarian Trends, the Umno Split and the Limits to State Power," in *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*, ed. Joel S. Kahn and Francis Kok Wah Loh (Sydney: Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with Allen & Unwin, 1992), 30; Khong, "Malaysia 1990," 169. This interpretation has been contested, e.g. Khoo Kay Jin, "The Grand Vision: Mahathir and Modernisation," in *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*, ed. Joel S. Kahn and Francis Kok Wah Loh (Sydney: Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with Allen & Unwin, 1992), 47.

In 1998, once again, Malaysia was in the midst of an economic crisis, brought on by the regional Asian financial crisis. Unemployment among all classes was rising.[20] Rather than the metaphoric pall of 1987, a literal pall hung over the country, pollution from forest fires in neighbouring Indonesia choked swathes of the country, a condition exacerbated by an ongoing water supply crisis which left approximately half the capital without running water, dependent on water supply trucks for months.[21]

The endpoint of this thesis is the political crisis of 1998, marked by the sacking of deputy prime minister and heir-apparent Anwar Ibrahim on 2 September 1998.[22] This ignominious dismissal was an indicator of the splintering of the vision for Malaysia's future. The Islamist opposition was no longer the "parochial" and "narrow-minded" clerics criticised by Mahathir in 1990; rather it now provided an alternative to the developmental vision of Umno. While the opposition still failed to break the two-thirds threshold, there was a swing of Malay votes away from *BN* and the Umno.[23] The shifts in the 1999 electoral contest mirrored an upheaval in the media of a very different nature, with the onslaught of more credible online news sources.[24] Rights-based NGOs underwent a revitalisation; and the split between the *dakwah* movements and the Umno bureaucracy (which was present even at the height of the government's efforts at Islamization) became more open, effectively symbolised by the incarceration and humiliation of Umno's top *dakwah* proponent, Anwar.[25]

Further, by 1998, women were key to the struggle between Umno and Pas. As Helen Ting has noted, this contest, particularly in the 2004 elections, included Umno's attempt to woo women voters through greater attention to women's rights.[26] The Umno vision of women was framed as being

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[20] An overview of the economic situation and responses is given in Jomo Kwame Sundaram, "Malaysia: From Miracle to Debacle," in *Tigers in Trouble: Financial Governance, Liberalisation and Crises in East Asia*, ed. Jomo Kwame Sundaram (Hong Kong; Cape Town; Dhaka; Bangkok; London; New York: Zed Books Ltd, 1998), 181-98.

[21] In 1997-98, I was living in Kuala Lumpur, reliant on these trucks. For how the haze was framed by the press locally, see Brian L. Massey, "How Three Southeast Asian Newspapers Framed 'The Haze' of 1997–98," *Asian Journal of Communication* 10, no. 1 (2000), 72-94.

[22] See Lee Hock Guan, "Malay Dominance and Opposition Politics in Malaysia," *Southeast Asian Affairs* 2002 (2002): 181-92.

[23] For analysis of the election results, see William Case, "Malaysia's General Elections in 1999: A Consolidated and High-Quality Semi-Democracy," *Asian Studies Review* 25, no. 1 (2001), 49-52.

[24] Cherian George, "Contentious Journalism and the Internet Advantage: Democratizing Public Discourse in Malaysia and Singapore" (Stanford University, 2003), 117-18; Meredith L. Weiss, "Parsing the Power of "New Media" in Malaysia," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 43, no. 1 (2013): 6-11; Khoo Boo Teik, "Networks in Pursuit of a "Two-Coalition System" in Malaysia: *Pakatan Rakyat*'s Mobilization of Dissent between *Reformasi* and the Tsunami," *Southeast Asian Studies* 5, no. 1 (2016): 75-82.

[25] Zainah Anwar, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: Dakwah among the Students* (Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1987), 38-9; Anil Netto, "A Black Eye for Human Rights," in *Reflections: The Mahathir Years*, ed. Bridget Welsh (Washington DC: John Hopkins University, 2004), 87-95.

[26] Helen Ting, "Gender Discourse in Malay Politics: Old Wine in New Bottle?," ed. Edmund Terence Gomez, *Politics in Malaysia: The Malay Dimension* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 75.

modern and in keeping with development norms, and is a key reference point for this thesis. In contrast, Pas women, and *dakwah* women more broadly (see below), were arguing that women should prioritise their role within the family. In an interview with Rebecca Foley, then-head of the *Dewan Muslimat Pas*, the Pas' women's wing, Jamilah Ibrahim said, "Men are the leaders of women inside and outside the home", continuing to say that women could only work outside the home if veiled and with permission of their husbands.[27] Likewise, the women's pages of *BH* and *Utusan* in 1998 often posited Islam as the answer to the growing contradictions in women's position(s) in society. Thus, women's role in both public and private was an important site for this political skirmish, and shifts on the women's pages during this era can help scholars understand the political upheavals that came after 1998. This thesis explores the position of the women's pages in these contests, and how far marginalised sites within the mainstream press conformed to the hegemonic narrative.

Thesis aims and significance

This thesis is the first study of the women's pages of the Malay-language press, contributing to growing scholarship that is re-evaluating women's pages globally, particularly in relation to the women's movement and the changes in career paths for female journalists.[28] My original contribution to knowledge is to examine the construction of the Malay-Muslim woman in the women's pages of the Malay-language press between 1987 and 1998, contrasted with the "malestream" Malay-Muslim woman during the same period. The thesis also contributes to the history of journalism in Malaysia, paying attention to the role women journalists played in the newsroom. Here I examine where this contribution sits along the existing literature.

Until the mid-1990s, scholarship on the women's pages, mainly based on research on US newspapers, largely derided them as fluff, devoted to the "Four Fs" (food, fashion, family, furnishings). The pages were ignored for their marginality, or studied to illustrate how they contributed to the construction of women as wives and mothers.[29] Scholarship on women journalists who worked prior to the middle

[27] Rebecca C. Foley, "The Challenge of Contemporary Muslim Women Activists in Malaysia" (Monash University, 2001), 145.
[28] Examples of this growing literature include Julie Annette Golia, "Courting Women, Courting Advertisers: The Woman's Page and the Transformation of the American Newspaper, 1895–1935," *Journal of American History* 103, no. 3 (2016), 606-28; Kimberly Wilmot Voss and Lance Speere, "More Than "Rations, Passions, and Fashions": Re-Examining the Women's Pages in the Milwaukee Journal," *American Journalism* 33, no. 3 (2016), 242-64; Dustin Harp, *Desperately Seeking Women Readers: U.S. Newspapers and the Construction of a Female Readership* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007).
[29] See e.g. Rodger Streitmatter, "No Taste for Fluff: Ethel L. Payne, African-American Journalist," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (1991), 528-40; Harriet Engel Gross and Sharyne Merritt, "Effect of Social/ Organizational Context on Gatekeeping in Lifestyle Pages," *Journalism Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (1981),

of the last century focuses, understandably, on those who wrote for the front page and the malestream news.[30] Since the mid-1990s, however, the study of the women's pages and the women who worked on them has become more complex.[31] Bernadette Barker-Plummer has looked at how the women's pages and journalists contributed to the US feminist movement in the 1970s.[32] Two of her studies note the fraught relationship between women's page journalists, and both the male editorial hierarchy and the feminists that they were covering. My thesis expands on her scholarship by examining how women page journalists advocate for stories from the margins of the malestream hierarchy and the ways in which their editors built the prestige of these reporters. Dustin Harp further focused on the profitability of the women's pages and thus how middle-class women adhered to ideals of "purity, piety, submissiveness and domesticity", positioned primarily as consumers.[33] Recent work by Julie Golia has gone further, looking at the importance of the women's pages to the evolution of the US newspaper.[34] Though I do not examine how the Malay-language papers' women's pages contributed to the financial sustainability of the newspaper, my thesis is informed by these approaches. Thus, the context for the critical discourse analysis of the stories analysed includes the dynamics of party political ownership; and the importance of advertising and female consumers. The interplay between these two factors occurred in a political contest framed as being between modernity and tradition, which adds to the complexity of the context.

The literature from other countries is sparse, and often takes a biographical approach to the women writing for the women's pages, rather than focusing on their role in the papers or the content of the

420-7; Zena Beth Guenin, "Women's Pages in American Newspapers: Missing out on Contemporary Content," *Journalism Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (1975), 66-75; Susan H. Miller, "Changes in Women's/ Lifestyle Sections," *Journalism Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (1976), 641-7.

[30] Examples abound, but a prominent selection includes Kay Mills, *A Place in the News: From the Women's Pages to the Front Page* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Linda Lumsden, "'You're a Tough Guy, Mary-and a First-Rate Newspaperman': Gender and Women Journalists in the 1920s and 1930s," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (1995), 913-21; Kathleen A. Cairns, *Front-Page Women Journalists, 1920-1950* (Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

[31] E.g. Dustin Harp, "Newspapers' Transition from Women's to Style Pages," *Journalism* 7, no. 2 (2006): 199; Kimberly Wilmot Voss, "Redefining Women's News: A Case Study of Three Women's Page Editors and Their Framing of the Women's Movement" (University of Maryland, 2004); Yang Mei-Ling, "Women's Pages or People's Pages: The Production of News for Women in the Washington Post in the 1950s," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 73, no. 2 (1996), 364-78; Miller, "Changes in Women's/ Lifestyle Sections."; Alice Fahs, *Out on Assignment: Newspaper Women and the Making of Modern Public Space* (University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 5-13. In contrast, see, on advice columns in the women's pages Ada Holland Shissler, "'If You Ask Me': Sabiha Sertel's Advice Column, Gender Equity, and Social Engineering in the Early Turkish Republic," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, no. 2 (2007), 1-30.

[32] Bernadette Barker-Plummer, "News as a Political Resource: Media Strategies and Political Identity in the US Women's Movement 1966-75," *Critical Studies in Mass Communications* 12 (1995), 306-24; "News and Feminism: An Historic Dialog," *Journalism & Communication Monographs* 12 (2010), 145-203.

[33] Harp, *Desperately Seeking Women Readers*, 21.

[34] Golia, "Courting Women, Courting Advertisers."

pages themselves. Thus, for example, Mariela E. Méndez examines the careers of two famous female writers, one Argentinian and one Brazilian, who used their newspaper writing to financially supplement their subversive literary careers.[35] Mary Jean Green, in contrast, looks at the implications and limitations of the presence of women writers and activists in the fascist press in post-War France.[36] In Australia, Justine Lloyd has looked at how the history of the women's pages (1870-1970) reflected broader debates in society over the role of women.[37] My research, rather, compares the gendered experiences of women in the malestream and women's pages of the newspapers, that is, how being a journalist and being female affected coverage differently depending on where a journalist worked.

Anthropologist Maila Stivens has extensively demonstrated how the Malay-Muslim woman has been a key support for the *BN*-dominated state. [38] In terms of the media, however, her work and other existing scholarship have focused on the (important) question of women's portrayal in women's magazines. For example, prominent media scholar Wang Lay Kim examines how women were represented in women's magazines, measuring this against the goals set by the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), arguing that the representation does not meet the criteria set out in Section J of the BPfA.[39] She uncovers institutional bias against women, but does not look at how women journalists might contest this narrative. Tabitha Frith has examined constructions of Malay-Muslim womanhood,

[35] Mariela E. Méndez, "'Só Para Mulheres" (Just for Women): Alfonsina Storni's and Clarice Lispector's Transgression of the Women's Page," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 35, no. 2 (2016), 413-37. Other examples of biographical stories of women's page writers include Kimberly Wilmot Voss and Lance Speere, "Marjorie Paxson: From Women's Editor to Publisher," *Media History Monographs* 10, no. 1 (2008), 1-14; "A Women's Page Pioneer: Marie Anderson and Her Influence at the Miami Herald and Beyond," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 85, no. 4 (2007), 398-421; Streitmatter, "No Taste for Fluff."; Janice Fiamengo, *The Woman's Page: Journalism and Rhetoric in Early Canada* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

[36] Mary Jean Green, "Gender, Fascism and the Croix De Feu: The 'Women's Pages' of *Le Flambeau*," 23, no. 8 (1997), 229-239.

[37] Justine Lloyd, "Women's Pages in Australian Print Media from the 1850s," *Media International Australia* 150, no. 1 (2014), 61-5.

[38] Stivens, "Sex, Gender and the Making of the New Malay Middle Class"; Maila Stivens, "'Family Values' and Islamic Revival: Gender, Rights and State Moral Projects in Malaysia," *Women's Studies International Forum* 29, no. 4 (2006), 354-67; Maila Stivens, "Post-Modern Motherhoods and Cultural Contest in Malaysia and Singapore," in *Working and Mothering in Asia: Images, Ideologies and Identities*, ed. Theresa W. Devasahayam and Brenda S.A. Yeoh (Singapore; Denmark: NUS Press; NIAS Press, 2007), 29-50; Maila Stivens, "Religion, Nation and Mother-Love: The Malay Peninsula Past and Present," *Women's Studies International Forum* 33, no. 4 (2010), 390-401.

[39] Wang Lay Kim, "Ways of Seeing Malaysian Women: Sketches of Women in Magazines in the Global Age," *Malaysian Journal of Communication* 12 (2006), 117-33. Women's magazines have also received more attention in other countries, e.g. Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995); Derya Duman, "Gender Politics in Turkey and the Role of Women's Magazines: A Critical Outlook on the Early Republican Era," *Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 28, no. 1 (2006), 75-92; Ammu Joseph, "Women's Magazines: Style over Substance," in *Whose News? The Media and Women's Issues*, ed. Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma (New Delhi; Thousand Oaks; London: Sage Publications, 2006), 204-31.

and argues that, in women's magazines, women are primarily depicted as consumers, contrasted with the construction of women by the state, by the Islamist movements and by the feminist Muslim NGO Sisters In Islam (SIS).[40] What differentiates my research from previous analysis is, first, that it examines how women journalists in the women's pages worked in and advocated for their stories within a male-dominated newsroom (which I examine in Chapter Three) through the oral histories of women journalists. Second, I triangulate these constraints and opportunities with the coverage in the women's pages, paying attention to women's relations to the state. The research, therefore, builds upon Stivens' insights into the role of the "Malay woman" in nation-building, and examines how it inflects the coverage and operations of the women's pages of two Malay-language dailies. Tying together the construction of women as mothers, as wives, and the masculine nature of the state is clearly political.[41] While, as the scholarship reiterates, it is important for women to be portrayed in ways that reflect the complexity of their experiences and aspirations, this focus has often been at the expense of examining the ways in which "fluff" constructs women as voters, or, more broadly, as political beings.[42]

Discrimination against women journalists in newsrooms has proved fertile ground for research. In 2011, in the tenth anniversary issue of *Feminist Media Studies*, important feminist media scholar Rosalind Gill argued that it was time to "get angry again" due to the continuing sexism within the media industry, and how sexism has adapted to changing ideas of acceptable behaviour, while still privileging male media workers over their female peers.[43] From Liesbet van Zoonen's landmark 1994 book, *Feminist Media Studies* to the latest international survey of women's representation and prescence in the media, the 2015 Global Media Monitoring Project, the gains made by women in the newsroom have been piecemeal and, as I explore throughout this thesis, the barriers against women journalists and women's equal representation in the media have been multi-faceted.[44] The research presented in this thesis examines the particular ways in which discrimination surfaced and evolved in

[40] Tabitha Frith, "Constructing Malay Muslim Womanhood in Malaysia," (Melbourne: Monash University Press: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002).
[41] See e.g. Orly Shachar, "The Israeli Womb: Images of Gendered Nationalism in the Israeli Press," in *Women and the Media: Diverse Perspectives*, ed. Theresa Carilli and Jane Campbell (Lanham; Oxford University Press of America, 2005), 19-34; Green, "Gender, Fascism and the Croix De Feu."; Gaye Tuchman, "Consciousness Industries and the Production of Culture," *Journal of Communication* (1983), 330-41; Joan Acker, "Gender, Capitalism and Globalization," *Critical Sociology* 30, no. 1 (2004), 17-41; Sara L. Martel, "Biopower and Reproductive Loss," *Cultural Studies* 28, no. 2 (2014), 327-45. etc.
[42] Yang, "Women's Pages or People's Pages.", 364-5.
[43] Rosalind Gill, "Sexism Reloaded, or, It's Time to Get Angry Again!," *Feminist Media Studies* 11, no. 1 (2011), 61-71.
[44] Liesbet van Zoonen, *Feminist Media Studies* (London: Sage, 1994); Sarah Macharia, "Global Media Monitoring Project 2015," (London; Toronto: World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), 2015).

the Malay-language newsroom, spanning the careers of the 21 journalist respondents, that is from the late 1960s until the time of the interviews in 2014. The thesis also builds on the insight of *Dallas Times-Herald* women's page editor (working at the Herald 1957-1984) Vivian Castleberry, who said "her reporters 'got away with murder because the dumb male editors never bothered to read it [the women's page]'".[45] I ask whether women were able to evade censorship on the women's pages, due to the perception held by both male editors and the writers themselves that women's news and the women's pages were unimportant.[46] I also ask whether this implies that the women writing on the women's pages were less aware of or influenced by party politics than the women writing for the malestream pages.

The key aims of this thesis are therefore to examine whether and how journalists in the women's pages portray women in ways that are different from the construction of women in the malestream pages; and what political significance the divergence between these depictions could hold. Its original contribution to knowledge is in terms of understanding how women's page journalists in Malaysia negotiated and advocated for stories within a male-dominated editorial hierarchy; how discrimination operated against women in the Malay-language newsrooms; and new understanding of how the "Malay-Muslim woman" was constructed by the Malay-language media. These contributions thus fit into the existing literature on the women's pages and feminist media studies, looking at the history of Malaysian women's journalism.

The Malaysian context

In 1987, the Malaysian population consisted of 60.4% *bumiputeras* (lit. "sons of the soil") or indigenes, 28.9% Chinese, 8.0% Indians and 2.7% others.[47] Even the "indigenous" *bumiputera* category, however, hid heterogeneity in terms of cultural, linguistic and religious difference, and differing histories in Malaysia.[48] Yet how Malaysians ethnically identify, or are identified by the state, can have significant

[45] Cited in Mills, *A Place in the News*, 116.
[46] The journalists on the women's pages felt they escaped censorship. Thus, for example, Fariza Saidin said censorship was "based more on political issues," interviewed 28 February 2014, Kuala Lumpur.
[47] Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, "Population Quick Info," (Putrajaya 2017).
[48] These ideas are explored extensively in the literature, see e.g. Anthony Crothers Milner, *Race or Civilization: The Localizing of 'the Malays'* (Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2010), 10-12; Anthony Reid, "Understanding Melayu (Malay) as a Source of Diverse Modern Identities," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 32, no. 03 (2001): 298-300; Umi Manickam Khattab, "Who Are the Diasporas in Malaysia? The Discourse of Ethnicity and Malay(Sian) Identity," *Sosiohumanika* 3, no. 2 (2010): 165; Amri Baharrudin Shamsul, "In Search of '*Bangsa Malaysia*': Politics of Identity in Multiethnic Malaysia," *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies* 27 (1995): 59; Caryn Lim, "Being 'Mixed' in Malaysia," ed. Zarine L. Rocha and Farida Fozdar, *Mixed race in Asia: Past, present and future* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2017): 119-21.

impacts, ranging from their access to education and welfare benefits, with *bumiputeras* privileged, to the degree of surveillance to which they are subject. From Independence until May 2018, the ruling coalition (initially the Alliance, the *BN* following violence in 1969) was dominated by three race-based parties, the Umno; the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA); and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). The coalition was thus premised on the idea that the interests of Malaysians were primarily formed through race, rather than class or geography.[49] I am not here asserting that race or ethnicity are *a priori* categories, but that race has been a key identifier for Malaysians, and that it has been significant since before Independence in 1957. Thus, the British administration in colonial Malaya, maintained the pre-eminence of British plantations by tying land use and ownership to ethnicity. Malays, for example, were described as being subsistence farmers, and the boundaries of this description were policed.[50] The colonial legacy of discrete ethnicities has been reinforced since decolonisation, through the privileging of the race-based parties to the centre-right, rather than the multi-racial parties of the left.[51]

One consequence of the dominance of race-based parties has been that from their beginnings, both the newspapers and the Umno constructed the Malaysian citizen as being Malay-Muslim (and generally male).[52] Particularly after the racialised violence of 1969, the myth that dominated political and public discourse was that if the Malays were given a larger slice of the economic pie, the greater stability and peace that would result would serve the interests of all.[53] Umno also argued that

[49] Much has been written on Malaysia's racial politics and identity formation. Key texts include Joel S. Kahn, "The Making and Unmaking(?) of a Malay Race," 2005; Milner, *Race or Civilization*; Helen Ting, "Malaysian History Textbooks and the Discourse of *Ketuanan Melayu*," in *Race and Multiculturalism in Malaysia and Singapore*, ed. Daniel P.S. Goh, et al. (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2009), 50-66; Reid, "Understanding *Melayu* (Malay) as a Source of Diverse Modern Identities"; Amri Baharrudin Shamsul, "Bureaucratic Management of Identity in a Modern State: "Malayness" in Postwar Malaysia," in *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States*, ed. D.C. Gladney (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 135-50.

[50] "Malay" farmers were thus, for example, forbidden from planting cash crops, see James J. Puthucheary, *Ownership and Control in the Malayan Economy* (Kuala Lumpur: INSAN, 2004; repr., Second reprint), 8-80; Jomo Kwame Sundaram, *A Question of Class: Capital, the State and Uneven Development in Malaya* (New York; Manila: Monthly Review Press; Journal of Contemporary Asia Publishers, 1988; repr., Second edition), 56-60.

[51] This research is thus consciously allied with a tradition of reading history against the grain of Cold War discourse. See Katharine McGregor, "Cold War Scripts," *South East Asia Research* 24, no. 2 (2016), 242-60.

[52] Within this context, the use of language such as "special rights", an oxymoron within a human rights framework that stipulates that all rights are universal, makes sense – Malays are the natural citizens of Malaysia, and thus are entitled to associated rights denied those identified as Other. For the origins of Malay nationalism, see Cheah Boon Kheng, *Merdeka! British Rule and the Struggle for Independence in Malaya 1945-1957* (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development, 2003), 120-31.

[53] The official rhetoric was that job function and race were to be disassociated, "Second Malaysia Plan," ed. Economic Planning Unit (Kuala Lumpur 1971), 1. On the New Economic Policy (NEP), see Jomo Kwame Sundaram, "Whither Malaysia's New Economic Policy?," *Pacific Affairs* 63, no. 4 (1990): 469-71.

economic development would detract from the Islamisation agenda of Pas, again to the benefit of all. Umno maintained the latter contention a key difference between Islamisation under themselves and under Pas: Umno's Islamic agenda was pro-development, and benefitted the entire nation, while Pas' Islamisation was medieval and would drag Malaysia economically and culturally backward. Further, as I show in Chapters Four and Five, the interests of the Malays were drawn against the interests of other ethnic groups – Umno's political power rested on the continuing trope of the marginalised Malay whose interests could only be served by a race-based political party and/ or system.

The racialized political system had an impact on the role of women in society. Since Independence, if not earlier, women's social, economic and political behaviours have been inflected by both race and class. While accounts of the "Malay" population in the colonial period drew attention to equality between the sexes, British land policy favoured male heads of households, as did post-Independence policies.[54] Women occupied a different role to men in terms of the elite and public sphere, but in rural areas they were economically active and to a large extent able to determine their own affairs, including initiating divorce and working on subsistence production and outside the home.[55] Avenues for education for women were, however, largely limited, there were few opportunities for them to work in urban settings. When they did they were hampered by both racial and sexual stereotypes.[56] Pioneering women in the newsrooms faced similar constraints.

Utusan is the older of the two papers studied, the Romanised version of a Jawi-script publication, *Utusan Melayu*, registered on 15 June 1938. It was the first newspaper financed by Malay capital, and at its beginnings had a strict policy of discrimination against those not identified as pure Malays (i.e. against those descended from Arabic or Indian ancestors).[57] The role of *Utusan* in defining and drawing

[54] Maila Stivens et al., *Malay Peasant Women and the Land* (London; New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1994), 13-15; Anthony Reid, "Female Roles in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia," *Modern Asian Studies* 22, no. 3 (1988), 629-45; Barbara Watson Andaya, "Studying Women and Gender in Southeast Asia," *International Journal of Asian Studies* 4, no. 1 (2007), 113-36.
[55] Reid, "Female Roles in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia."
[56] Leslie N. O'Brien, "Education and Colonialism: The Case of Malaya," *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 16, no. 2 (1980): 54-56; Charles Hirschman and Akbar Aghajanian, "Women's Labour Force Participation and Socioeconomic Development: The Case of Peninsular Malaysia, 1957–1970," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 1 (1980), 30-49.
[57] Gender discrimination was also prevalent. A Malay woman who married a non-Malay could no longer work at the paper. Zainuddin Maidin, *Di Depan Api, Di Belakang Duri: Kisah Sejarah Utusan Melayu (In Front Fire, Behind Thorns: The History of Utusan Melayu)* (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications & Distributors Sdn Bhd, 2013), 17. See also William R. Roff, *Studies on Islam and Society in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009), 171-2; Hendrik M. J. Maier, "The Writings of Abdul Rahim Kajai: Malay Nostalgia in a Crystal," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 41, no. 01 (2010): 80-2.

boundaries around "the Malay" is shown in Henk Maier's article on founder Abdul Rahim Kajai. Maier notes that "They were very Malay-centred, set in a tone of being wronged, be it selectively so: whereas they did find fault with Chinese or Kelings [sic]…, the authority of either the British masters or their Malay aristocratic accomplices was never seriously challenged or questioned."[58] As Chapter Four shows, there are continuities between this Malay-centric vision in the first half of the twentieth century and the way Malays were depicted during the period studied here.

Following the Second World War, the paper's editors Keris Mas[59], A. Samad Ismail[60], and Said Zahari (1951-1961) were active in the independence movement, but also often espoused left-wing politics that transcended race.[61] The government jailed the latter two journalists (in 1976 and 1963 respectively) for alleged involvement with the ongoing Communist insurgency (1948-1960; 1968-1989, though Said was arrested in Singapore as part of a crackdown on the left, known as Operation Coldstore).[62] Prior to Independence in 1957, the main goal of these writers and the goals of the Umno coincided. Once the Umno were in power, the journalists' focus on social justice brought them into conflict with the party.[63] In 1961, following protracted tensions, Umno assumed control of the majority of the shares in the newspaper, resulting in a three-month strike, led by the unions. The strike was, ultimately, unsuccessful. Many of those who had been involved in the struggle for independence left the paper, or journalism, notably Said. Zainuddin Maidin, in his history of the newspaper, says that prior to this, the paper's editors had been "*antikaum modal dan antipasaran bebas*" (anti-capitalist and anti-free market).[64] Zainuddin was influential in shaping the myth of the newspaper. Having been employed by Said, he rose to the rank of chief editor in 1983, staying in this position until 1992. According to him, the paper's leftist leanings "angered the majority of the Malays who supported UMNO and were the major share-holders of the newspaper. They boycotted *Utusan Melayu*, causing its shares to plummet... UMNO had to save the newspaper."[65] The quote illustrates that *Utusan* editors

[58] Maier, "The Writings of Abdul Rahim Kajai," 78.
[59] Kamaluddin Muhammad, with *Utusan* from 1947-56.
[60] At *Utusan* between 1940 and 1958, and active in *BH* during my research period.
[61] Laurent Metzger, "Keris Mas, *Memoir 30 Tahun Sekitar Sastera*," *Archipel* (1981), 194-5; Said Zahari, *Dark Clouds at Dawn: A Political Memoir* (Kuala Lumpur: INSAN, 2001), 35-76.
[62] These allegations have been denied. See *Dark Clouds at Dawn*, 102-04. The political role of the Communist insurgency has been explored in Collin ER Abraham, *'The Finest Hour': The Malaysian-MCP Peace Accord in Perspective.* (Petaling Jaya: SIRD, 2006).
[63] The best account of the strike, which has been dealt with fleetingly in most histories of the Malaysian press, is Said Zahari, *Dark Clouds at Dawn*.
[64] Maidin, *Di Depan Api*, *Di Belakang Duri*, 132.
[65] The Unsung Heroes, (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications & Distributors, 2004): 37. He also asserts that circulation plummeted to 23,000 copies before the strike, rising to 50,000 in 1964, *Di Depan Api*, *Di Belakang Duri*, 143. This fall in circulation could have been due to increased competition and other factors, see Lily Zubaidah Rahim, "Daring to Challenge the Status Quo: The Lateral Vision and Meandering Political Journey of

positioned the paper as the voice of the Malay people. Its Malay nationalist roots were important to the identification of the journalists working in the paper – that it belongs(ed) to "the" Malays, rather than to any elite interest.[66] Moreover, his analysis assumed an identity between the paper, the Malays and Umno. Following the collapse of the strike, the priorities of the newspaper more closely aligned with the ruling coalition and those I interviewed did not refer to the strike or to the left-wing journalists, but only to the history of *Utusan* as part of the independence movement.[67] This silence mirrors the fate of left-wing Malays, in particular, and the left-wing history of the independence movement more generally, although the strike was commemorated in *Utusan's* official 50th anniversary publication.[68]

Even during its period of left-of-centre politics, the newspaper celebrated its continuing close relationship with Umno, even claiming responsibility for persuading the first Prime Minister, (Tunku) Abdul Rahman (1957-1970) to stand for Umno president in 1951.[69] Despite the newspaper's attempts to scrutinise the Alliance government under Abdul Rahman, the paper could still be positioned within the broad Umno fold. Rather than supporting the (outlawed) Communist Party of Malaya or other political parties, the editorials that sparked the Prime Minister's anger were those supporting the Agriculture Minister Abdul Aziz Ishak over matters affecting the livelihood of landless farmers.[70] From the start, the paper legitimised criticism coming from within the Umno, rather than criticisms from outside the party. Yet, as argued by Harold Crouch, the main threats to Umno's position (until the 2018 election) came from splits within the Malay polity, and particularly within the party.[71] Thus, the split between Mahathir and Razaleigh Hamzah in 1988 and the subsequent split with Anwar Ibrahim in 1998, constituted two critical moments in the history of both the party and Malay politics.

Left Malay Nationalists from Singapura," in *Reading the Malay World*, ed. Rick Hosking, et al. (Kent Town, South Australia: Wakefield Press, 2010), 53-8.

[66] Roff, *Studies on Islam and Society in Southeast Asia*.

[67] The strike is also completely neglected in some media histories, see eg Noor Bathi Badarudin, *Dunia Media Moden (Modern Media World)* (Bentong: PTS Publications & Distributors Sdn Bhd, 2002), 14-16.

[68] There has been some revisionism of the history of the Communist Party of Malaya, focusing on the history of Chinese-identifying insurgents who made of the majority of CPM members. See e.g. Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya: Resistance and Social Conflict During and after the Japanese Occupation, 1941-1946* (NUS press, 2012); Ng Sze-Chieh, "Silenced Revolutionaries: Challenging the Received View of Malaya's Revolutionary Past" (Arizona State University, 2011), 105-08. *Di Sebalik Jendela Utusan*, (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Melayu (Malaysia), 1989), 31-47.

[69] Maidin, *Di Depan Api, Di Belakang Duri*, 139.

[70] See Zahari, *Dark Clouds at Dawn*, 63-7.

[71] Crouch, "Authoritarian Trends, the Umno Split and the Limits to State Power," 27-30.

In contrast, *BH* started in 1957, just prior to Malaya's independence, as a translation of the pro-British *Straits Times*. It began publishing its own stories in 1958 under the editorship of A. Samad Ismail, whose departure from *Utusan* was seen by his former colleagues as a betrayal of his nationalist roots.[72] The Umno took over the peninsula-based paper following amendments to prevent foreign ownership of the press in 1974.[73] The newspapers' different starting points continued to influence the newsrooms. *Utusan* portrayed itself during the period studied as the voice of the "regular" Malay, and often addressed a rural, working-class audience. For example, an article in the 50th anniversary booklet lauded the paper's charitable efforts.[74] *BH*, in contrast, was aimed at Malay businesspeople and the upper-middle classes. How these audiences were constructed is explored further in Chapters Four and Five. The newspapers were the only daily national Malay-language papers published throughout the period being studied.

Given the importance of race in both newspapers' histories, three key events need attention. First, the Independence of the Federation of Malaya in 1957, when governance passed to the race-based coalition, known as the Alliance, of the Umno, the MCA and the MIC. Second, the formation of Malaysia in 1963, incorporating the Federation, predominantly Chinese Singapore, and the predominantly *bumiputera*, though largely Christian, East Malaysian states (now Sabah and Sarawak). Singapore was expelled from Malaysia in 1965, altering further the racial and geographic make-up of Malaysia.[75] The third important event, which was to take on mythic proportions as a repeatedly conjured latent threat, was the racial violence following the elections of May 1969.[76] This violence, though confined primarily to Kuala Lumpur, led to the declaration of an emergency, suspension of Parliament until 1971 and the ousting of Abdul Rahman.[77] The Alliance was dissolved and its successor, the *BN*, expanded to include some former opposition parties, weakening the appeal of the parties outside the coalition.

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[72] Maidin, *Di Depan Api*, *Di Belakang Duri*, 4.
[73] The publishing company had been based in Singapore, so the ownership regulations forced it to split into separate Singaporean and Malaysian entities, see Anuar, "Defining Democratic Discourses," 146-7.
[74] Raja Ahmad Niza, "Salam Kemanusiaan *Utusan Melayu* (Welcoming Kindness In *Utusan Melayu*)," in *Di Sebalik Jendela Utusan: Suara Keramat* (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Melayu (Malaysia), 1989), 80-2.
[75] Michael Hill and Lian Kwan-Fee, *The Politics of Nation Building and Citizenship in Singapore* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 2-3; Anthony C Milner and Helen Ting, "Race and Its Competing Paradigms: A Historical Review," *Transforming Malaysia: Dominant and competing paradigms* (2014), 18-58.
[76] Sophie Lemière, "Gangsta and Politics in Malaysia," ed. Sophie Lemière, *Misplaced democracy: Malaysian politics and its people* (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2014). 97-98; Negara Majlis Gerakan, "The May 13 Tragedy: A Report," ed. Tun Abdul Razak (Kuala Lumpur: National Operations Council, 1969), 77-87.
[77] Anthony Reid, "The Kuala Lumpur Riots and the Malaysian Political System," *Australian Outlook* 23, no. 3 (1969), 271-8.

The life stories of women journalists reflected these changes happening at a national level. As I explore in Chapter Three, there were distinctions between the experiences of different generations of women journalists depending on their relation to the New Economic Policy (NEP). The NEP came into force in 1971, with the stated goals of relieving poverty and dissociating job function with race, meaning primarily increasing social mobility for those identified by the state as Malay.[78] One way the policy was implemented was through increasing access to tertiary education and implementing racial quotas in local universities (among other areas).[79] Thus, the women who had been in the newsroom the longest were those least likely to have had access to higher education, while all those who joined the newsrooms in the late 1980s and 1990s were university-educated.

Developments outside the newsroom brought gender relations under closer scrutiny, particularly the emergence of the *dakwah* or Islamisation movements from the mid-1960s on.[80] The *dakwah* movements provided acceptable, yet alternative, answers to the problems posed by Umno's development agenda. Eminent scholars in both history and sociology refer to two uses of the word Islamisation, first referring to the introduction of Islam to the region and second referring to ongoing processes since then.[81] It is the latter that I am interested in. Nonetheless, the changes wrought by *dakwah* movements, evident since the mid-1960s, were on a continuum, including, for example, the "*Kaum Muda/ Kaum Tua*" (Young Group/ Old Group) antagonisms since the end of the 19th century.[82] These earlier movements offer deep cultural resources from which the later movements draw, both in terms of individuals and in terms of the movement. Thus, I find the definition of Islamisation by Norani Othman compelling:

> Islamisation is that process by which what are perceived as Islamic laws, values and practices are accorded greater significance in state, society and culture. It is a contemporary

[78] "Second Malaysia Plan," 1; Jomo, "Whither Malaysia's New Economic Policy?," 469-77.
[79] Ariffin Omar, "Origins and Development of the Affirmative Policy in Malaya and Malaysia: A Historical Overview," *Kajian Malaysia* 21, no. 1&2 (2003), 20-2.
[80] For early analysis of the origins of the *dakwah* movements, see Judith Nagata, "Religious Ideology and Social Change: The Islamic Revival in Malaysia," *Pacific Affairs* 53, no. 3 (1980), 405-39.
[81] G. Stauth, *Politics and Cultures of Islamization in Southeast Asia: Indonesia and Malaysia in the Nineteen-Nineties* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2002), 45-7; William R. Roff, "Patterns of Islamization in Malaysia, 1890s-1990s: Exemplars, Institutions and Vectors," in *Studies on Islam and Society in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009), 98, 106.
[82] Judith Nagata, "Islamic Revival and the Problem of Legitimacy among Rural Religious Elites in Malaysia," *Man* 17, no. 1 (1982): 43-5. This continuity is contested, but ruptures in Malay society can be overstated. Azmi Aziz and Amri Baharrudin Shamsul, "The Religious, the Plural, the Secular and the Modern: A Brief Critical Survey of Islam in Malaysia," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 5, no. 3 (2004), 348-53.

> phenomenon partly associated with the postcolonial era and partly seen as an assertion or re-assertion of identity in response to modernization.[83]

Islamisation in this definition is an historically and geographically situated process, of which the *dakwah* movements (see below) are a subset. This definition also points to the importance of the changes in perception of Islamic "laws, values and practices." By drawing attention to Islamisation as a process, the definition elides the arguments raised by William R Roff, among others, that the term "Islamisation" positions Southeast Asian Islam on the periphery of an Arab-centric worldview.[84] It also emphasises the dynamic nature of the interpretation of Islam, illustrated historically by theologian Peter Riddell, whose study of Islamic texts and scholarship in Southeast Asia shows it as an iteration of Islam practised in the Arabic peninsula: Southeast Asia is on the Muslim periphery, but has been innovative and dynamic in terms of the generation of Islamic knowledge.[85]

The growing strength and visibility of the *dakwah* movements from the late 1970s and early 1980s, and their connection with international trends, have been documented by activist academics such as Zainah Anwar and Chandra Muzaffar.[86] The main organizations that comprise this movement were the Tabligh groups, originating from India, which were politically peripheral in Malaysia; the Darul Arqam movement whose growth was eventually seen as a challenge to the security of the ruling elites; and the *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (*Abim*, Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia), led during its period of greatest prominence by Anwar Ibrahim. These groups worked in a field of intra-Malay politics defined by antagonism between the Umno and Pas.

Both Chandra and Zainah draw attention to the impact of the 1969 elections and the NEP as drivers of growth for these movements, with students and universities being key sites for *dakwah*

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[83] Norani Othman, "Islamization and Democratization in Malaysia in Regional and Global Contexts," in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia: Comparing Indonesia and Malaysia*, ed. Ariel Heryanto and Sumit K. Mandal (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 124.
[84] Roff, "Islam Obscured?," 3-5.
[85] Peter G. Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World: Transmission and Responses* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 8. See also Michael F. Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma Below the Winds* (London; New York: Taylor & Francis, 2003), 190-5.
[86] Anwar, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia*; Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia*. See also Nagata, "Islamic Revival and the Problem of Legitimacy."; Amri Baharrudin Shamsul, "Inventing Certainties: The *Dakwah* Persona in Malaysia," in *The Pursuit of Certainty: Religious and Cultural Formulations*, ed. Wendy James (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 112-133; Maimunah Mohd Tahir, "The Notion of *'Dakwah*' and Its Perceptions in Malaysia's Islamic Literature of the 1970s and '80s," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 20, no. 2 (1989), 288-97; Vedi R. Hadiz and Khoo Boo Teik, "Approaching Islam and Politics from Political Economy: A Comparative Study of Indonesia and Malaysia," *The Pacific Review* 24, no. 4 (2011), 463-85.

proselytisation in the 1970s and 1980s. As Farish A. Noor argues, these movements challenged Umno and Pas, requiring both to undertake reform.[87] Various scholars illustrate how participants in the *dakwah* movements were conscious of their role in helping to create a new society, in challenging the status quo and in searching for the "true" meaning of Islam.[88] Thus, the changes visible on the women's page were part of complex social changes, both influenced by and influencing the Islamisation of Malaysian society.

Ethnographic research examining how and why women partake in Islamisation movements has been broad, often looking at the engagement of the Islamist women's movement with feminism.[89] Saba Mahmood's work on the women of the piety movement in Egypt was seminal in this regard, looking at Islamist women on their terms, rather than through a Western lens of empowerment and agency.[90] A similar thread can be seen in the work of Zakia Salime who looks at three important events in Morocco, tracing how the Islamist movement has been informed by feminism and vice versa (1992-2003).[91] In the contest over who speaks for women, Islamist women mobilised. Without the feminist movement, Islamist women may not have found (within partriarchal structures), the space to assert their political voice.[92] Looking at similar movements in Mali, Dorothea Schulz illustrates the dynamism that characterises the women at the forefront of Islamist activism.[93] The latter recognise the Islamic injunction for women to be the main transmitters of Islamic knowledge to both their children and to

[87] Farish A. Noor, "Blood, Sweat and Jihad: The Radicalization of the Political Discourse of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (Pas) from 1982 Onwards," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, no. 2 (2003): 203-4.
[88] Shamsul, "Inventing Certainties," 118-28; Michael Peletz, "'Ordinary Muslims" and Muslim Resurgents in Contemporary Malaysia: Notes on an Ambivalent Relationship," in *Islam in an Era of Nation-States: Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia*, ed. R.W. Hefner and P. Horvatich (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 231-75; Anwar, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia*, 69-70.
[89] Saba Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Agency and the Liberatory Subject," in *On Shifting Ground: Muslim Women in the Global Era*, ed. Fereshteh Nouraie-Simone (New York: Feminist Press at CUNY, 2005), 111-52; *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005); Zakia Salime, *Between Feminism and Islam: Human Rights and Sharia Law in Morocco* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Maimuna Huq, "Talking *Jihad* and Piety: Reformist Exertions among Islamist Women in Bangladesh," in *Islam, Politics, Anthropology*, ed. Filippo Osella and Benjamin Soares (Chichester; Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 156-74; James Bourk Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity, and a Self-Help Guru* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2015), xiv-xv.
[90] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*; Saba Mahmood, "Feminism, Democracy, and Empire: Islam and the War of Terror," in *Women's Studies on the Edge*, ed. Joan Wallach Scott (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2008), 81-114.
[91] Salime, *Between Feminism and Islam*, 134-47.
[92] This has also been explored in other cultures, e.g. Green, "Gender, Fascism and the Croix De Feu," 235; Kimberly J. Morgan, "Gender, Right-Wing Populism, and Immigrant Integration Policies in France, 1989–2012," *West European Politics* 40, no. 4 (2017): 887-89; Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women* (New York; London; Sydney; Toronto; Auckland: Anchor Books, 1991), 312-18; Ulrike M. Vieten, "Far Right Populism and Women: The Normalisation of Gendered Anti-Muslim Racism and Gendered Culturalism in the Netherlands," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 37, no. 6 (2016), 625.
[93] Dorothea E. Schulz, *Muslims and New Media in West Africa: Pathways to God* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 1.

their husbands, and emphasise the importance of the veil as an outward marker of inward piety, and as a marker of the limits of Western capitalism (despite its ambivalent role as a capitalist instrument).[94]

In Malaysia, "moderate" *dakwah* proponents, led by Anwar Ibrahim, were invited to join the *BN*.[95] The growth in the Islamic bureaucracy, the Islamic Values Policy in 1981 and the opening of the International Islamic University in 1983 resulted from this cooption, and accelerated the influx of *dakwah* proponents into various levels of government.[96] These initiatives were designed to show that the state was at the forefront of the *dakwah* movement, and to curtail dissent. This strategy, however, was complemented by coercion, as noted earlier.[97]

An Islamic identity was, thus, legitimised by the state, which provided an avenue for channelling anti-regime tendencies. Further, the state supplied the burgeoning Islamic bureaucracy with resources, through the media, the education system and direct funding for research.[98] The *dakwah* movement, however, was rooted in protest, concerned both about the social and economic impacts of modernity. Among its key tenets was the belief in social justice.[99] While there have been attempts to reconcile this Islamic identity with the neoliberal identity being simultaneously crafted, the deep-seated antagonism between neoliberalism and Islam's (in this context) social justice imperative mean that this attempt created tensions and paradox at the heart of the Mahathir administration.[100]

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[94] Carla Jones, "Materializing Piety: Gendered Anxieties About Faithful Consumption in Contemporary Urban Indonesia," *American Ethnologist* 37, no. 4 (2010), 617-9.
[95] Judith Nagata, "Ethnonationalism Versus Religious Transnationalism: Nation-Building and Islam in Malaysia," *The Muslim World* 87, no. 2 (1997), 136; David Camroux, "State Responses to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia: Accommodation, Co-Option, and Confrontation," *Asian Survey* 36, no. 9 (1996), 852-68; William Case, "The 1996 Umno Party Election: 'Two for the Show'," *Pacific Affairs* 70, no. 3 (1997), 397.
[96] Shamsul, "Inventing Certainties," 115.
[97] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Islam and Violence in Malaysia," in *S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies Working Paper* (Singapore: Nanyang Technological University, 2007), 11-14; Kamarulnizam Abdullah, "National Security and Malay Unity: The Issue of Radical Religious Elements in Malaysia," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International & Strategic Affairs* 21, no. 2 (1999), 261-83.
[98] See Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid and Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail, "Islamist Conservatism and the Demise of Islam Hadhari in Malaysia," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 25, no. 2 (2014), 170; Aziz and Shamsul, "The Religious, the Plural, the Secular and the Modern," 353; Kikue Hamayotsu, "Islam and Nation Building in Southeast Asia: Malaysia and Indonesia in Comparative Perspective," *Pacific Affairs* 75, no. 3 (2002), 357-8.
[99] Most clearly enunciated in Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia*, 16-8. During the period examined, Abim attempted to distance itself from the politics of protest, and appeared to concentrate on international rather than local events, as evidenced by the press releases of 1992-1993. See Mohd Anuar Tahir, *Pendirian Politik Abim (Abim's Political Stand)*, (Petaling Jaya: Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, 1993), 19, 35-149.
[100] Mahathir Mohamad, *The Challenge* (Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1997; repr., 6th), 14-6.

Neoliberalism and the construction of the *Melayu Baru*

Mahathir's first tenure as Prime Minister (1981-2003) was marked by two important trends, neoliberalism and Islamisation. These two strands dominated domestic policy throughout this stint in office, and come together in the idea of the *Melayu Baru*, the New Malay.[101] While the *Melayu Baru* was conceived as predominantly masculine, the ideals put forward, particularly in terms of entrepreneurship, resonated with Malay women. In this section, I will examine the literature on the *Melayu Baru*, which I identify as a neoliberal subject with Malay inflections. I further argue that the "*Melayu Baru*" was the Umno's "ideal" for men, but that portrayals of women in the women's pages drew on this representation to present a public role for women, though with a stronger focus on religion, rather than development, as being able to resolve readers' problems.

Neoliberalism in this context refers to a set of policies and initiatives which are united in their core aim of transforming the market into the main, if not sole, provider of goods and services, so that individual choice and freedom can be articulated through the marketplace. On the state level, it involves a commitment to a smaller role for the state in matters of social security, welfare and provision of amenities and services, carried out through the privatisation of state assets. The neoliberal subject, however, is committed to "responsibilization" and entrepreneurship, the belief that by taking responsibility, working hard and smart, a person can succeed (both financially and personally). Anthropologist Ilana Gershon, for instance, argues that neoliberalism socially constructs people as rational, risk-taking businesses, with law acting as the neutral mediator between actors that are different only in scale, from the large conglomerate to the single individual.[102] Neoliberalism elides the role of factors such as institutional bias, entrenched inequality and intergenerational poverty, concentrating on the individual, rather than society, as the focus for change.[103]

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[101] Khoo Boo Teik, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism: An Intellectual Biography of Mahathir Mohamad* (Kuala Lumpur; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 333-38; Amri Baharrudin Shamsul, "From *Orang Kaya Baru* to *Melayu Baru*: Cultural Construction of the Malay 'New Rich' " in *Culture and Privilege in Capitalist Asia*, ed. Michael Pinches (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), 101-04; Terence Chong, "The Construction of the Malaysian Malay Middle Class: The Histories, Intricacies and Futures of the Melayu Baru," *Social Identities* 11, no. 6 (2005), 576-81; Virginia Matheson Hooker, "Reconfiguring Malay and Islam in Contemporary Malaysia," *RIMA: Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2000), 13.
[102] Ilana Gershon, "Neoliberal Agency," *Current Anthropology* 52, no. 4 (2011), 539.
[103] Also drawn from David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital: And the Crises of Capitalism* (London: Profile Press, 2010), 10-11; Taylor C. Boas and Jordan Gans-Morse, "Neoliberalism: From New Liberal Philosophy to Anti-Liberal Slogan," *Studies In Comparative International Development*, no. 2 (2009), 137-61; Henry A. Giroux, "The Terror of Neoliberalism: Rethinking the Significance of Cultural Politics," *College Literature* 32, no. 1 (2005), 1-19; Nicholas Gane, "The Emergence of Neoliberalism: Thinking Through and Beyond Michel Foucault's Lectures on Biopolitics," *Theory, Culture & Society* 31, no. 4 (2014), 3-27.

The conception of neoliberalism that is perhaps most insightful when looking at the Malaysian experience comes from political theorist Wendy Brown who discusses the "*active and normative*" nature of neoliberalism.[104] Brown's four "aspects of neo-liberal de-democratization" could have been written to describe the Mahathir project.[105] Never attached to democracy, Mahathir found in neoliberalism, particularly when married to neoconservatism, an ideological ally. In Mahathir's iteration of the NEP, different from his predecessor's emphasis on social justice, the Malaysian state actively intervened in the economy to help create the *Melayu Baru*.[106] This *Melayu Baru* was similar to Brown's neoliberal, neoconservative subject in the United States: not expected to value political autonomy; expected to transform political problems into individual problems (generally with a market solution); and to become "a consumer-citizen... available to a heavy degree of governance and authority."[107] This brief discussion illustrates neoliberalism, like globalization, is a false universalism: Neoliberalism is neither a completely universal proposition nor an entirely localized one, but something which has local manifestations.[108] Thus, neoliberalism as it is understood and practised in Malaysia has both similarities to and differences from neoliberalism elsewhere.

Mahathir's 1986 book *The Challenge* shows that the *Melayu Baru* eschews left-wing materialist ideologies, from trade unions that would undermine wage and profit growth, to the "materialist" Islam of the *dakwah* movements.[109] That Mahathir's neoliberal subject was the *Melayu Baru* was made clear by his deputy Muhammad Taib who said:

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[104] Wendy Brown, "American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization," *Political Theory* 34, no. 6 (2006), 694. Italics in original.
[105] Brown, "American Nightmare", 703.
[106] "Third Malaysia Plan, 1976–1980," ed. Economic Planning Unit (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers, 1976), v.
[107] "American Nightmare," 703. Brown's analysis of neoliberalism has been criticised, see Terry Flew, "Six Theories of Neoliberalism," *Thesis Eleven* 122, no. 1 (2014), 60-61; Boas and Gans-Morse, "Neoliberalism"; Bill Dunn, "Against Neoliberalism as a Concept," *Capital & Class* 43, no. 1 (2017), 435-54. Yet, her discussion of governmentality is useful in this context, see Wendy Brown, *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 37-59.
[108] Clive S. Kessler, "Globalization: Another False Universalism?," *Third World Quarterly* 21, no. 6 (2000), 931-42.
[109] Mohamad, *The Challenge*, 16.

> The *New Malay* knows clearly who he is (identity), where he is going (vision) wherever he may be (level and role); is highly adaptable; is a leader who brings about changes in the technology or thinking of his people and who places his religion of Islam as the foundation of all aspects.[110]

Further, in 1999, Mahathir defined the *Melayu Baru* as someone "willing to face all challenges, who can compete without assistance, who is educated and learned, sophisticated, disciplined, trustworthy and efficient. Hard work, perseverance, excellence, ethical conduct and a commitment to the Islamic faith are some of the other elements".[111] The neoliberal Malay subject was not expected to conform to "Western" ideals of gender equality, marriage equality or lack of religious fervour. His faith, however, was an adjunct to hard work and perseverance, not their font.

In an ethnographic survey of self-identified Malay entrepreneurs, Patricia Sloane shows how the entrepreneurs saw business as being in the service of both Islam and the Malays. [112] They distanced themselves from the privilege that their status as *bumiputera* entailed, despite having benefited from pro-*bumiputera* policies – they felt their achievements proved the NEP's worth;[113] and espoused the values of hard work and vision as key to success, rather than government assistance. They saw wealth and religiosity as being complementary, as Mahathir envisaged in *The Challenge*.[114] There were, however, differences: Success for these entrepreneurs was a result of faith, the reason behind hard work and enterprise. In a parallel study conducted in Indonesia, Daromir Rudnyckyj points out that this manifestation, embodied in management even of large companies, held little appeal to the workers in the factories he examined.[115] Likewise, there is little to suggest that Sloane's entrepreneurs were to be found at all levels of Malay Malaysian society, or even that they embodied principles that were shared by a large swathe of middle-class Malay Malaysians. Instead, these values were primarily those shared by those who identified themselves as entrepreneurs, those who aspired to that status. These values were drawn in contrast to those around them. This thesis examines how similar values were expressed through the pages of the Malay-language press, contrasting the way the entrepreneur

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[110] Muhammad Taib, *The New Malay* (Malaysia: Visage Publications, 1993), 1. Cited in Chong, "The Construction of the Malaysian Malay Middle Class," 577.
[111] Mahathir Mohamad, *A New Deal for Asia* (Kuala Lumpur: Pelanduk Publications, 1999), 39.
[112] Patricia Sloane, *Islam, Modernity, and Entrepreneurship among the Malays* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); Patricia Sloane-White, "Working in the Islamic Economy: Sharia-Ization and the Malaysian Workplace," *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 26, no. 2 (2011), 304-34.
[113] Sloane, *Entrepreneurship among the Malays*, 194-5.
[114] Sloane, *Entrepreneurship among the Malays*, 60-1.
[115] Daromir Rudnyckyj, Spiritual Economies: Islam, Globalization, and the Afterlife of Development, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 123-4.

was portrayed in the women's pages with the leader pages, and the impact that these representations had on the political construction of the Malay-Muslim woman.

My thesis also builds upon the work of geographers such as Yildiz Atasoy and Mona Atia, who have studied how Islamic movements in Egypt and Turkey articulate a neoliberal *dakwah* movement.[116] Atia's research on faith-based development tracks the evolution among *dakwah* proponents in Egypt, particularly followers of the Life Makers movement, from charity as the provision of services to charity as the provision of opportunity. Likewise, Atasoy charts how Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan's form of Islamic revivalism draws upon Western and neoliberal ideas to articulate an "authentic" Turkish citizen contrasted with the Kemalist vision.[117] Both studies primarily examine events post-2001 and prior to the Arab Spring and echo the ideas of Mahathir in *The Challenge*, though they make no reference to this text. This articulation of neoliberalism and Islam was possible due to the specific ways in which the movements have evolved. In Turkey's case, the Islamist *AKP* (*Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi*, or Justice and Development Party) was in opposition to the state. The party was considered the protector of the poor, despite a commitment to neoliberal policies that directly undermined the security and livelihood of *AKP* supporters. Thus, the actions of the state (in this case the Kemalist judiciary, army and police forces) increased sympathy for the *AKP* based on the commonality of Islam, which overrode the opposing tensions caused by a commitment to neoliberalism. These dynamics contrast with the Malaysian experience, where the Islamic agenda of the *dakwah* movement was closer to what Atia terms the "natural view" of the *AKP*'s predecessors, that is, committed to the concept of social justice.

When examining how the women's pages depict a neoliberal subject, it is therefore important to identify the markers that constitute this subject. Here I suggest appropriate markers consist of the development of an entrepreneurial spirit; a turning away from the state as the locus for solving communal problems; and a focus on self-development as the means of alleviating poverty ("responsibilization"). Stories should portray the state as, at most, a benign facilitator, rather than determining success or failure. The neoliberal state provides individuals with the (training) opportunities that allow them to take responsibility for their own success or failure. In subsequent

[116] Mona Atia, "'A Way to Paradise': Pious Neoliberalism, Islam, and Faith-Based Development," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 102, no. 4 (2012), 808-27; Yildiz Atasoy, *Islam's Marriage with Neoliberalism: State Transformation in Turkey* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
[117] On the continuities between Kemalist and *AKP* Turkey, see Hakan Ovunc Ongur, "Plus Ça Change … Re-Articulating Authoritarianism in the New Turkey," *Critical Sociology* 44, no. 1 (2018), 45-59.

chapters, I analyse how far the women's pages differed from or followed this portrayal, finding that while it does conform to these principles to a point, when modernity and development fail women, they were urged to turn to religion, rather than pursuing neoliberal individualism.

Malaysia: An authoritarian state?

Scholars have often discussed whether Malaysia constitutes an authoritarian state, and if so how far this authoritarianism reaches. Since the early 1990s, several terms such as "semi-authoritarian" have been coined to classify the Malaysian state under Mahathir.[118] From 1984, Mahathir tightened and promulgated repressive legislation, but used these powers comparatively rarely, and never against broad swathes of the population. Ariel Heryanto and Sumit Mandal posit that authoritarianism is "a set of diffuse relationships both in the public and private spheres where the distribution of power is greatly unbalanced but – despite appearances – is never totally concentrated in a single person or group."[119] In Malaysia, not only were the political parties of the ruling coalition comprised of various factions and blocs that vied for influence and prestige, while other parts of the regime (the bureaucracy, the media) shared the same over-arching aims, they concurrently had particular concerns, priorities or agenda. Further, the more we drill down to the individual level, the greater the disparity between the official line and the concerns of individual *BN* supporters. Thus, for example, a reporter's interpretation of policy may differ from that of politicians. In Chapter Three, I examine the implications of this insight for the relations between editors and women journalists in the Malay-language media, further unpacking how authoritarian structures, in this case the media, were composed of various competing interests.

The post-Cold War literature on political systems recognises the complexity in authoritarian regimes.[120] Referring to both Malaysia and Singapore as hybrid systems, that is authoritarian states

[118] Harold Crouch, "Malaysia: Neither Authoritarian nor Democratic," in *Southeast Asia in the 1990s: Authoritarianism, Democracy and Capitalism*, ed. Kevin Hewison, Richard Robison, and Garry Rodan (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993), 135-57; Anne Munro-Kua, *Authoritarian Populism in Malaysia* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1996); William Case, "Semi-Democracy in Mahathir's Malaysia," in *Reflections: The Mahathir Years*, ed. Bridget Welsh (Washington, DC: John Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, 2004), 77-86.
[119] Ariel Heryanto and Sumit K. Mandal, "Challenges to Authoritarianism in Indonesia and Malaysia," in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia: Comparing Indonesia and Malaysia*, ed. Ariel Heryanto and Sumit Kumar Mandal (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 2.
[120] Lee Morgenbesser, *Behind the Façade: Elections under Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2016); Johannes Gerschewski, "The Three Pillars of Stability: Legitimation, Repression, and Co-Optation in Autocratic Regimes," *Democratization* 20, no. 1 (2013), 13-38.

with an overlay of democratic legitimising mechanisms, Lee Morgenbesser indicates that while the elites in these countries have enjoyed majority support, there has historically been an inability to change the regime, a lack of independent checks on executive power, and that the balance of power was tilted towards the executive.[121] These factors, particularly relevant when discussing the media, justify the use of the term "authoritarian."

In the context of the media, this complexity is pertinent, as I show in Chapter One. The legislation that applied to the publication and printing of news was highly authoritarian, yet the lived experiences of the journalists that I interviewed appear to contradict this, with consistent agreement by the most political journalists that they never experienced censorship.[122] Thus, for the purpose of this thesis, I refer to Malaysia as authoritarian, but provide evidence that authoritarian does not mean monolithic.

Chapter outline

The media in Malaysia was formed through the complex interplay of authoritarian legislation, the racialized politics of Malaysia and the histories of newspapers, politicians and individual journalists. In Chapter One, I examine these factors, look at their influence during this period and ask how far authoritarian control extended into the newsroom. I survey the existing literature on women journalists in Malaysia and situate this thesis in feminist media history, specifically the growing literature that analyses the importance of women's pages in newspapers.

Chapter Two develops the methodology of the thesis. This thesis draws on both oral histories of the working lives of 21 women journalists who worked both in the women's pages and in other sections of the newspaper, and critical discourse analysis (CDA) of over 8,000 newspaper articles. The oral histories shed light on newsroom processes and provide context to the articles analysed in Chapters Four and Five. This chapter reviews both the theoretical grounding and the limitations of the research.

[121] Morgenbesser, *Behind the Façade*, 11. While the 2018 election has undermined this thesis, the features noted here were in place throughout the period studied in this thesis.
[122] A survey of journalists published in 2012 showed mixed attitudes to the prevalence of press censorship, but because there is no breakdown by newspaper, it is difficult to ascertain if that contradicts or reinforces the results of my interviews. Sony Jalarajan Raj and Rohini Sreekumar, "Covenant Cog or Functional Fourth Estate: A Survey of Malaysian Journalists' Attitudes Towards Their Profession," *Romanian Journal of Journalism and Communication* 2, no. 1 (2012), 16-32.

In Chapter Three, I analyse journalists' oral histories which reveal fractures within the newspaper hierarchy. I further examine the differences between women who worked in different parts of the newspapers; how different generations perceived their work and the newsrooms differently; and how discrimination impacted on the careers and stories of women journalists. This chapter also shows how discrimination framed women and women's issues as being marginal to struggles both between government and opposition political parties, and within the ruling Umno. Women's page journalists were thus more free from party political and malestream editorial control than their colleagues elsewhere in the paper.

In Chapters Four and Five, I examine how women were constructed differently (or not) in the religion, leader and women's pages of each of the two newspapers. The class-based nature of the two newspapers and their differing histories informed how they conceived of their readership, with implications for their portrayals of the "Malay woman" in different parts of each of the newspapers. What emerges is the differing role of the Umno in various parts of the papers, and how that influenced the different depictions of women, with the women's pages in both papers being able to a large extent to escape the domestic confines proposed by the leader and religion (malestream) pages.

In Chapter Six, I analyse the findings from the three previous chapters, showing how the contradictions between the government's domestic policies of neoliberalism and Islamisation became increasingly apparent, particularly in the circumstances of economic stress following the Asian financial crisis of 1997-1998.

Lastly, the Conclusion summarises the arguments made over the course of this thesis and proposes avenues for future research. The key argument rests on the proposition that the media in Malaysia are not monolithic, despite being part of an authoritarian apparatus, and the different experiences of women journalists and different coverage of women in the malestream and women's pages of the newspaper indicate the greater flexibility and freedom (within bounds) that women had when working in the margins.

Chapter One: The Malaysian media landscape

> "In the end, the Government was forced to break up the strike and UMNO took over *Utusan Melayu* but did not run it as a voice piece of the party but placed importance on journalistic ethics and professionalism even though it appeared to be pro-Government."
>
> - Zainuddin Maidin, Chief Editor (*Utusan* 1983-1992)[1]

Through a close analysis of the relationship between the women's pages and women journalists and the construction of women in the newspapers between 1987 and 1998, this thesis reflects on how marginalised pages within a conservative newspaper can offer non-hegemonic interpretations of women's role in society. This chapter examines the Malaysian media landscape, using the concept of hegemony, examining the formal and informal constraints on the Malay-language newspapers. I begin with the legislative framework within which the media operated. This Draconian framework, however, provides only part of the story. I contend that ownership in Malaysia was a function of legislation, but far less understood, and only briefly explored here, is the relationship between the different segments of the media, particularly different language media. I further examine more informal constraints, concentrating on processes of professionalisation.

This chapter places this thesis in the literature on hegemony and the media. It also locates the thesis within the field of feminist media studies, particularly linking it to existing studies on the women's pages. Thus, I begin by exploring the formal constraints on the Malaysian media, then go on to look at how those constraints affect the relevant analytical frameworks.

[1] Maidin, *The Unsung Heroes*, 35.

Formal constraints on the newspapers and their journalists

The Malaysian Constitution of 1957 guarantees freedom of expression in Article 10, but, as with the other rights-based provisions, subject to other pieces of legislation as "deemed necessary or expedient":

> in the interest of the security of the Federation or any part thereof, friendly relations with other countries, public order or morality and restrictions designed to protect the privileges of Parliament or of any Legislative Assembly or to provide against contempt of court, defamation, or incitement to any offence;[2]

In practice, during the period discussed, opposition and activist attempts to interpret Constitutional provisions through a broad human-rights framework were largely unsuccessful.[3] For example, in 1990, the Supreme Court overturned a High Court decision that would have granted civil society organisation Aliran permission to publish their newsletter in Malay, as the law allowed the Home Ministry "absolute discretion" in deciding whether to grant a publishing permit.[4]

Legislation governing the print media was established by the British. Upon their return to Malaya after their humiliating exit during the Second World War, the British were confronted by a newly-discovered thirst for independence.[5] One of the many ways this manifest was a blossoming of the local print media. Documents in the National Archive list a burgeoning number of newspapers at the start of 1948, compared with the previous year.[6] Once the Printing Presses and Sedition Ordinances came into force that year, the number of new publications dropped sharply. Given the timing, it can be assumed that this drop was because they did not receive licenses, possibly due to cost, but also perhaps because the publications were critical of the returning colonial government. The colonial government, however, cannot be fully blamed for legislation that has been made increasingly harsh by successive

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[2] *Federal Constitution* (Malaysia), article 10.2a
[3] Thio Li-Ann, "Beyond the 'Four Walls' in an Age of Transnational Judicial Conversations: Civil Liverties, Rights Theories, and Constitutional Adjudication in Malaysia and Singapore," *Columbia Journal of Asian Law* 19, no. 2 (2006), 428-518.
[4] *Minister of Home Affairs v Persatuan Aliran Kesedaran Negara* (1990) 1 MLJ 351 (Supreme Court).
[5] Mustapha Hussain, *Malay Nationalism before Umno: The Memoirs of Mustapha Hussain*, trans. Insun Sony (Kuala Lumpur; Singapore: Utusan Publications & Distributors 2005); Shamsiah Fakeh, *Memoir Shamsiah Fakeh: Dari Awas Ke Rejimen Ke-10 (Shamsiah Fakeh's Memoirs: From Awas to the 10th Regiment)* (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2007), 29-30; Rashid Maidin, *The Memoirs of Rashid Maidin: From Armed Struggle to Peace* (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2005), 17-24.
[6] "Seri Penerbitan Arkib Negara, Majalah Dan Akhbar," National Archives of Malaysia.

Malaysian Parliaments.[7] Rather, this historical context shows that from its inception, the framework governing the media in Malaysia was about containment rather than about facilitating debate or dialogue. This interpretation, and fear, of the role of the media continues up to and beyond the research period.

The cornerstone piece of legislation during the period this thesis examines was the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 (PPPA), successor to the Printing Presses Act 1971 (revised in 1974) and 1948's Printing Presses Ordinance.[8] One of the key revisions of 1974 was the restriction of foreign ownership of newspapers, which led to the indirect ownership of the NSTP group, including *BH*, by the Umno.[9] The PPPA was revised twice in 1987 by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, just prior and just after *Operasi Lallang*, as well as in 1988.[10] Mahathir had a well-documented distrust of both lawyers and the courts, and expressed concern that judicial review restricted the elected Parliament's ability to enact and carry out repressive measures.[11] The 1987 amendments to the PPPA illustrate this distrust – removal of the right to judicial review of Ministerial decisions, and concentration of power in the Executive. The PPPA required printers and publishers to obtain a license from the relevant Minister (often the Home Minister) to print any periodical. The Minister could, and often did, include conditions to the printing permit, including frequency of publication, languages in which the publication may be published and geographic limits to circulation. Licenses were awarded on an annual basis, from the start of the calendar year, and there was no presumption of renewal. Further, as mentioned, the Minister's decision on the award, amendment or revocation of a license was final, and not subject to judicial review. Other pertinent provisions in the PPPA criminalised defamation and allowed for the seizure of publications.[12]

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[7] Amanda Whiting, "Emerging from Emergency Rule? Malaysian Law 'Reform' 2011-2013," *Australian Journal of Asian Law* 14, no. 2 (2013), 2-5.
[8] John A. Lent, "Social Change and the Human Right of Freedom of Expression in Malaysia," *Universal Human Rights* 1, no. 3 (1979), 56; Zainoor Sulaiman, "Media Watchdog in Malaysia," in *Seminar on Media Monitors in Asia* (Bangkok: Asian Mass Communication Information and Research Centre, 1994), 14-22.
[9] Edmund Terence Gomez, "Politics of the Media Business: The Press under Mahathir," in *Reflections: The Mahathir Years*, ed. Bridget Welsh (Washington, D.C.: Southeast Asia Studies Program, The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, John Hopkins University, 2004), 475-76.
[10] Zaharom Nain and Wang Lay Kim, "Ownership, Control and the Malaysian Media," in *Who Owns the Media?: Global Trends and Local Resistance*, ed. P.N. Thomas and Zaharom Nain (London; New York: Zed Books, 2005), 251, 55-6.
[11] Chandran Jeshurun, "Malaysia: The Mahathir Supremacy and Vision 2020," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (1993): 209-10; M.S. Abas and K. Das, *May Day for Justice: The Lord President's Version* (Kuala Lumpur: Magnus Books, 1989), 18.
[12] Chang Teck Peng, "*Media Massa Dan Hegemoni Barisan Nasional: Satu Kajian Kes Ke Atas Peranan Media Dalam Pengurusan Krisis Kewangan 1997 Di Malaysia* (Mass Media and *Barisan Nasional* Hegemony: A Case Study on the Role of the Media in Managing the 1997 Financial Crisis in Malaysia" (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2002), 83-87; Anuar, "Defining Democratic Discourses," 149-51.

Another piece of legislation that influenced journalists, despite being rarely used against the media or media practitioners during this period, was the Internal Security Act (ISA) 1960, which allowed for detention without trial, potentially indefinitely.[13] In 1982, soon after he first ascended to the premiership, Mahathir released 168 ISA detainees, and it was hoped that this signalled a new, more liberal era.[14] In amendments to the Act in 1988 and 1989, however, Mahathir strengthened the Minister's powers under the Act, attempting to curb judicial review and the writ of habeas corpus; removing the power of an Advisory Board to release detainees during six-month reviews; and increasing Ministerial powers to appoint and dismiss the Advisory Board.[15] The Act also contained provisions on the control of "subversive" publications.[16] The ISA defined the parameters of government power, and the potential use of the legislation served as a constraint.[17] Further, senior journalists, such as A. Samad Ismail who worked in *BH* at this time, had been detained (1976-1981 in this instance).[18]

Other notable pieces of legislation include the broadly defined Sedition Act 1948, the Official Secrets Act 1972 and various provisions in the Penal Code.[19] Together, these functioned as a formidable arsenal against freedom of expression and freedom of information. The legislative arsenal was rarely used by the State against the mainstream media, particularly against *Utusan* or *BH*, although both were subject to numerous private defamation suits.[20]

[13] For a personal accout, see Rehman Rashid, *A Malaysian Journey* (Petaling Jaya: Rehman Rashid, 1993), 229-39.
[14] Netto, "A Black Eye for Human Rights," 90.
[15] *Internal Security Act*, (Malaysia), s8A-D, s12.
[16] *Internal Security Act.*, s22-31.
[17] For an exposition of the use of the ISA, see Koh Swe Yong, *Malaysia 45 Years under the ISA*, trans. Agnes Khoo (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2004).
[18] Koh, *Malaysia 45 Years under the ISA*, 151; Zahari, *Dark Clouds at Dawn*, 102-04.
[19] Sections of the Penal Code that pertain to freedom of expression include s.153; s.292-294; s. 298 & 298A; s.499-502; and s.504. Cherian George, "Media in Malaysia: Zone of Contention," *Democratization* 14, no. 5 (2007), 896; Graham Brown, "The Rough and Rosy Road: Sites of Contestation in Malaysia's Shackled Media," *Pacific Affairs* 78, no. 1 (2005), 40-3; Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, "Free Speech in Malaysia: From Feudal and Colonial Periods to the Present," *Round Table* 100, no. 416 (2011), 540-1.
[20] While journalists were aware of defamation laws, they did not appear to have a chilling effect on the government-aligned media, cf Garry Rodan, "Embracing Electronic Media but Suppressing Civil Society: Authoritarian Consolidation in Singapore," *The Pacific Review* 16, no. 4 (2003), 503-24.

Despite recognition by some respondents that censorship occurred, a number either did not recognise its presence or spoke in detail about the freedom they enjoyed as journalists.[21] Yet, the impact of this arsenal of laws has been discussed by Mustafa K. Anuar in relation to the 2004 elections, and by Wong Kokkeong, using the lens of development journalism, in relation to the 1999 elections.[22] Both find that the environment was highly regulated, but both studies look at the newspapers during elections. This focus is useful to demonstrate the extent of government control, but these periods appear to be chosen precisely because enhanced political vulnerability translates into greater regulation of content. This thesis is primarily concerned with periods when the *BN* government was politically confident of public support, so it examines how control operated when the media was under less intense scrutiny.

The legislative framework alone is insufficient, though necessary, to describe the circulation of power in the Malay-language newsrooms. Chang Teck Peng's insightful PhD thesis examines how hegemony operated in the newsroom by analysing the coverage of the Asian financial crisis (July-December 1997).[23] It shows that the coverage in two newspapers directly owned by Umno (*New Straits Times* and *BH*) more closely mirrored the government position than a paper owned by government allies (*Sin Chew Jit Poh*). His findings show how the newspapers strengthened elite hegemony at a time of crisis and the close links between legislation and media ownership. As all owners needed to be licensed by the relevant Minister, and few newspaper licenses were awarded, the print media in Malaysia consisted of a politically-connected oligopoly.[24] Editors, particularly in the Malay-language newspapers, were political appointments. An extreme example is Johan Jaafar, editor-in-chief at *Utusan* from 1992 to 1998. He had no prior "hard" news experience before his appointment, which my respondents related as resulting from his close ties with then-Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim (see Chapter Three).[25]

Aside from legislation, the government also used informal channels to influence the media. Said Zahari relates, in 1959, being summoned by the Deputy Prime Minister who "rose from his chair and lashed

[21] See Chapter Three, and Jalarajan Raj and Sreekumar, "Covenant Cog or Functional Fourth Estate," 24-25; Adibah binti Ismail and Syd. Abdul Rahman Hj. Syd. Zin, "Evaluating the State of Investigative Journalism in Malaysia from Practioners' Perspectives," in *International Conference on Corporate Law* (Surabaya 2009), 12.
[22] Mustafa K. Anuar, "Politics and the Media in Malaysia," in *2004 Philippine Political Science Association (PPSA) Regional Conference* (Manila 2005), 25-47; Wong Kokkeong, "Asian-Based Development Journalism and Political Elections," *Gazette* 66, no. 1 (2004), 25-40.
[23] Chang, "Media Massa Dan Hegemoni," 195.
[24] Nain and Wang, "Ownership, Control and the Malaysian Media," 256-60.
[25] John Hilley, *Malaysia: Mahathirism, Hegemony and the New Opposition*, Politics in Contemporary Asia (London; New York: Zed Books, 2001), 106; Anuar, "Defining Democratic Discourses," 162.

out against *Utusan Melayu*."[26] This episode indicates that politicians assumed the power to summon and berate newspaper editors soon after Independence. Thus, whether it is the official "show-cause" letter, where newspapers have to defend themselves against vaguely worded charges or risk losing their license, or the more informal, but often intimidating, calls from ministerial offices, there is regular communication between government and the editorial floor.[27]

The multi-lingual print landscape and its implications

Malaysia's print landscape has been demarcated by language. In the interviews, respondents identify a "Malay" audience, acknowledging that some non-Malays read the papers, though they were seen as exceptions rather than the rule.[28] There are numerous implications, economic, social and political, that result. The major newspapers in peninsular Malaysia during the period of study were the English-language *New Straits Times*, sister paper to *BH*, and *The Star*; the Chinese-language *Sin Chew Jit Poh* and *Nanyang Siang Pau*; the Tamil-language *Tamil Nesan*; and the two Malay-language papers. The Jawi-script, Malay-language newspaper *Utusan Melayu* was ideologically significant, despite marginal circulation. Across this period, the Malay-language newspapers had the largest circulation. Together, between 1991 and 1998, the two broadsheets reached at least 20% of the population, with their Chinese counterparts reaching around 18% of the population; the English-language dailies reaching not more than 15% of the population; and the Tamil-language dailies reaching only around two percent of the population.[29] These figures do not tell the whole story. Looking at advertising rates, the English-language and Chinese-language newspapers were, and were perceived as being, comparatively well-resourced.[30] Thus, the Malay-language newspapers emphasised their role in defending "the Malays" against a variety of perceived threats, from neo-colonialism to economic competition with other races, examined in greater detail in Chapters Four and Five.

The racialised demarcation had further implications. Race, as noted earlier, is not an essential category.[31] Nonetheless, in contemporary newspapers, the demarcation by language implied a

[26] This related to the coverage of a debate between the Prime Minister and the Agricultural Minister: Zahari, *Dark Clouds at Dawn*, 65; Said Zahari, "Remembering Operation Cold Store," Pusat Sejarah Rakyat.
[27] Sonia Randhawa, Susan Loone, and Pauline Puah, *Freedom of Expression and the Media in Malaysia* (London; Kuala Lumpur: Article 19; Suara Rakyat Malaysia, 2005), 97-9.
[28] E.g interviews with Rosnah Majid, 18 February 2014, Kuala Lumpur; Maizura Mohd Ederis, 13 January 2014, Taman Melawati; Mona Ahmad, 6 February 2014, *BH* office.
[29] Statistics from James Selva, *Media Guide 2001* (Kuala Lumpur: WhiteKnight Communications, 2001), 60-68.
[30] Selva, *Media Guide 2001*, 106-14.
[31] For a discussion of race construction in Malaysia, particularly of the Malays, see A.C. Milner, "Ideological Work in Constructing the Malay Majority," in *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea,*

demarcation by race. The Malay-language newspapers served a Malay-identifying market, the Chinese-language a Chinese-identifying market, and the English-language newspapers a more cosmopolitan, and more affluent, market. Further, the Malay-language newspapers presumed a Malay-identifying audience in their exploration of Islam, language, music and even travel. In contrast, the Chinese-language newspapers contained coverage of political events in mainland China and Taiwan, and their entertainment pages featured Hong Kong pop stars and musicians. This demarcation served a marketing purpose, but also perpetuated cleavages which reinforced the political status quo, which in turn served the ultimate owners of the newspapers, the race-based political parties. The print media thus illustrate how the different communities talked to themselves and/ or about "others" in ways that segregated them: There was not one nation imagined, but a variety of nations. In *Utusan*, for example, there were two weekly columns, *Desas Desus Masyarakat Cina* (Chinese Whispers) and *Pandangan Akhbar Cina* (View from the Chinese papers) which underscored the difference between "the Malay" point of view and "the Chinese" on domestic matters. This demarcation has more recently been replicated in the online environment, where social media further this ghettoisation of communities who rarely glimpse what is happening in other communities even when the occupy the same geographical space.[32] Thus, it is key to an understanding of the audience of the Malay-language newspapers that the act of reading the daily newspaper was not so much an act of citizenship, but an act of Malay nationalism.[33] Identifying both positively as a Malay, and identifying broadly as "not-non-Malay" and more narrowly as "not-Chinese" contributed to privileging the "Malay" identity above the "Malaysian" identity.

The apparent primacy of the Malay identity begs the question of the positioning of the "Muslim" identity. As I demonstrate in this thesis, the newspaper and the reporters attempted to make an equivalence between these identities. The *dakwah* movement, however, was opening up possibilities for seeing the "Muslim" identity usurp the primacy of the "Malay" identity.[34] I examine how far the

China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States, ed. Dru Gladney (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 163-5; Lian Kwan-Fee, "The Construction of Malay Identity across Nations Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 157, no. 4 (2001), 873-6. For race in general see e.g. Robin O. Andreasen, "Race: Biological Reality or Social Construct?," *Philosophy of Science* 67 (2000), 653-66.

[32] See e.g. Pablo Barberá et al., "Tweeting from Left to Right: Is Online Political Communication More Than an Echo Chamber?," *Psychological science* 26, no. 10 (2015), 1531-42; Fabiana Zollo et al., "Debunking in a World of Tribes," *PLoS ONE* 12, no. 7 (2017), 1-27; Susan Jacobson, Eunyoung Myung, and Steven L. Johnson, "Open Media or Echo Chamber: The Use of Links in Audience Discussions on the Facebook Pages of Partisan News Organizations," *Information, Communication & Society* 19, no. 7 (2016), 875-91.

[33] cf Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Second Edition ed. (London; New York: Verso, 1983, 2006), 32-36.

[34] Amri Baharrudin Shamsul, "Identity Construction, Nation Formation and Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia," in *Islam in an Era of Nation-States: Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia*, ed. Robert W.

newspapers, by attempting to strengthen Malay identity, premised on being Muslim, allowed "Muslim" to supplant the primacy of the identification as Malay and how this shift affected the women's pages.

Media and hegemony: The framing of women

Hegemony, in the tradition of Gramsci, is the maintenance of differentials of power, wealth and privilege without overtly coercive tactics.[35] As Raymond Williams asserts it "is not limited to matters of direct political control but seeks to describe a more general predominance which includes, as one of its key features, a particular way of seeing the world and human nature and relationships."[36] Cultural, religious and educational institutions, among others, help to maintain hegemony. Yet, as noted in the context of Iran by media scholar Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi, "a state political practice that aims at 'hegemony' is often thwarted and fosters resistance."[37] Resistance to hegemony may or may not be progressive, but it affects how the elite(s) justify differentials of power. Thus, for example, the *dakwah* movements in Malaysia challenged the existing justifications for power differentials, but were not in favour of broadly progressive change, such as rights-based equality for women.[38]

Whether the media operates as a site for maintaining hegemony or for challenging and deconstructing power remains an active debate. The perception of journalists is often the latter, even in an authoritarian context. Thus, many journalists join the profession to make a difference. In her survey

Hefner and Patricia Horvatich (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 210. See also Tabitha Frith, "Ethno-Religious Identity and Urban Malays in Malaysia," *Asian Ethnicity* 1, no. 2 (2000), 117-29; Gerhard Hoffstaedter, *Modern Muslim Identities: Negotiating Religion and Ethnicity in Malaysia* (Copenhagen: NIAS, 2011), 224-27.

[35] Kevin Ryan, "Hegemony and the Power to Act," in *Hegemony and Power: Consensus and Coercion in Contemporary Politics*, ed. Mark Haugaard and Howard H. Lentner (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 197; Stuart Allan, *News Culture*, 3rd ed., Issues in Cultural and Media Studies (Maidenhead; New York: McGraw-Hill; Open University Press, 2010), 119; Kate Crehan, *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology* (London; Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2002), 102-04; Alessandro Olsaretti, "Croce, Philosophy and Intellectuals: Three Aspects of Gramsci's Theory of Hegemony," *Critical Sociology* 42, no. 3 (2016): 340-5; Ruth Wodak, "Critical Discourse Analysis," in *The Routledge Companion to English Studies*, ed. Constant Leung and Brian V. Street (London; New York: Routledge, 2014), 306.

[36] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), 118.

[37] Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ali Mohammadi, "Hegemony and Resistance: Media Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 12, no. 4 (1990), 33.

[38] I am not arguing that Islam is opposed to progressive change, including feminist change, but that the *dakwah* movements were not progressive in these regards. On Islamic feminism, for instance, see, e.g., KH. Husein Muhammad, *Fiqh Wanita: Pandangan Ulama Terhadap Wacana Agama Dan Gender (Women's Jurisprudence: Scholars' Views on Gender and Religious Discourse)*, trans. Norhayati Kaprawi and Zaitun Mohamed Kasim (Petaling Jaya: Sisters In Islam, 2004).

of 65 journalists working in *Orde Baru* Indonesia, Angela Romano found that even journalists who felt that the main function of the press was as a watchdog rejected the idea that this was incompatible with "the aspirations, ideals and operations of development or *Pancasila* journalists."[39] Thus, in this authoritarian setting, journalists perceived themselves as working for the benefit of the people, rather than elites, though working in conjunction with the elites.

The view of journalists as watchdogs has come under sustained attack, particularly by the Left and by feminist media theorists. This attack comprises several fronts. Below, I first examine the issue of corporate ownership of the media; how professionalisation can embed a conservative bias in the assessment of what constitutes news; and the evolving critiques by feminist media theorists, as part of the field of cultural studies. At each stage I explore how far these critiques apply to the Malaysian context and the newspapers under review in this thesis.

Both corporate ownership and reliance on advertising can jeopardise media independence. The nexus between the US media and big business has been, for example, explored by Ben Bagdikian in *The Media Monopoly*.[40] He argues that in a Western context, the ability of the media to hold corporations to account is compromised by the extensive interests of the corporations that own major media conglomerates, despite rhetoric to the contrary. Perhaps the clearest indication of the power of media ownership to trump press freedom recently has been the attempts by the media owned by Rupert Murdoch to silence academics, regulators and other outlets.[41]

In a Malaysian context, there has been a clear nexus between the newspapers and the political elite. While licenses for magazines flourished in Malaysia in the early 1990s,[42] the ownership of newspapers

[39] Angela Romano, *Politics and the Press in Indonesia* (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 57.
[40] Ben Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 138-51. See also Jonathan Hardy, "The Contribution of Critical Political Economy," in *Media and Society*, ed. James Curran (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2010), 186-209; Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York; Toronoto; London; Sydney; Bergvlei: Vintage, 1994), 3-14; Amelia Arsenault and Manuel Castells, "Switching Power: Rupert Murdoch and the Global Business of Media Politics: A Sociological Analysis," *International Sociology* 23, no. 4 (2008), 488-513.
[41] The campaigns against critics in Australia are explored in Mitchell Hobbs and Stephen Owen, "Stifling Dissent: The Murdoch Press and Its Campaigns against Its 'Critics'," *Communication Research and Practice* 2, no. 2 (2016), 137-58.
[42] Primarily specialist, women's or hobby magazines. There have been few critical current affairs magazines granted a license. Mohd. Safar Hasim, *Mahathir Dan Akhbar (Mahathir and the Press)* (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 1996), 11.

remained strictly controlled, licenses only given to those closely allied to the *BN*, and even to factions within the ruling coalition.[43] The 1987 suspension of the licenses of both *The Star* and *Sin Chew Jit Poh* as part of *Operasi Lallang* illustrates this nexus: Both newspapers resumed printing after ownership was restructured.[44] *The Star* was taken over by the MCA, while *Sin Chew* came under the ownership of a timber tycoon with close ties to the Sarawakian Chief Minister.[45] A major difference in ownership between *BH* and *Utusan* is that the former has been owned indirectly, while *Utusan* has been owned directly by the Umno, thus it is only degrees of distance from political ownership that is pertinent in this context.[46] Considering that all printing and publishing licenses had to be approved by the Home Minister, this nexus of political power and media ownership is unsurprising.

All the respondents recognised a close alliance between the licensed media in Malaysia and the ruling coalition. When asked about censorship, respondents talked about the "angle" that the newspaper takes on all issues, similar to the angle Western newspapers take on a story (a comparison used by some respondents).[47] Marhaini Kamaruddin said, "*Utusan*, we're more on the government's voice", and, further, "We put our stand on it, and **as long as the government of the day is *BN*** and the Constitution is still there, we have to protect [them]."[48] This quote shows pride in the close relationship between *Utusan* and the government and was, paradoxically, given as an indicator of more professionalism in *Utusan* than in other papers. The second quote indicated that the journalist felt allegiance not to the government as such, but to the political parties of *BN*. This party-based allegiance was not seen by respondents as problematic, equivalent to Western newspapers which are right- or left-leaning, a difference in degree rather than kind. In this context, they speak of freedom as journalists, recognising that only those who unconditionally supported the idea that *BN* had a *right* to govern would either work for, or advance in, the Malay-language press.

[43] Nain and Wang, "Ownership, Control and the Malaysian Media."; Dhillon, "Malaysian Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Era, 1981-2003," 130.
[44] Discussed briefly in Brown, "The Rough and Rosy Road," 41; Jason P. Abbott and John Wagner Givens, "A Comparative Analysis of Online and Print Media During the 2013 Malaysian General Election: A Research Note," *Berita*, Autumn (2014), 25.
[45] Chang, "Media Massa Dan Hegemoni," 15.
[46] NSTP's ownership, and the politics behind it, is discussed in Gomez, "Politics of the Media Business," 475-79; Chang, "Media Massa Dan Hegemoni," 131-32.
[47] Interviews with Marhaini Kamaruddin, 1 April 2014, *Utusan* office; Jamhariah Jaafar, 27 March 2014, Bangsar; 'Damia', 26 January 2014, Bangsar.
[48] Marhaini, interview. Emphasis inserted.

Professionalisation, newsroom culture, and development journalism as gendered constraints

Professionalisation ensures that the status quo is preserved through defining what constitutes a good story, a "good" journalist, and the values a journalist aspires to. Sociologist Livy A. Visano examines professionalisation's role in prioritising and reinforcing the notion that rationalism underpins modernity, and the work that the concept of professionalism does in the production and maintenance of a "symbolic framework."[49] Professionalisation, thus, works to obscure difference and to establish norms. Meryl Aldridge and Julia Evetts contend, however, that journalists have, to some extent, been resistant to the idea of becoming media professionals, preferring to be members of a union rather than a professional association, more "consonant with the entrenched individualism" of journalists' occupational identity.[50] Nonetheless, as Sigurd Allern shows there are attributes that journalists perceive as being crucial to their trade, as reflected in text-books and journalism codes of ethics.[51] These include the attributes of objectivity, balance and fairness. Scholars such as Janet Steele and Lawrence Pintak, however, have shown that journalists are part of the society in which they live, and are shaped by the important events and attitudes that colour that society.[52] The importance of context has also been illustrated by Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini, comparing newsrooms in 18 "Western" countries, calling into question the idea of a "universal" journalist, an untouched observer of events.[53]

[49] Livy A. Visano, "Work, Occupations and Professionalization: Cultures of Coercive Credentialism," in *Work, Occupations & Professionalism*, ed. Stephen E. Bosanac and Merle A. Jacobs (Whitby: de Sitter Publications, 2011), 13-4.
[50] Meryl Aldridge and Julia Evetts, "Rethinking the Concept of Professionalism: The Case of Journalism," *British Journal of Sociology* 54, no. 4 (2003), 8-9.
[51] Sigurd Allern, "Journalistic and Commercial News Values," *Nordicom Review* 23, no. 1-2 (2002), 139-40. See also Roberto Herrscher, "A Universal Code of Journalism Ethics: Problems, Limitations, and Proposals," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 17, no. 4 (2002), 279-81; David Randall, *The Universal Journalist*, 3rd ed. (London; Ann Arbor: Pluto, 2007); Tony Harcup and Deirdre O'Neill, "What Is News? Galtung and Ruge Revisited," *Journalism Studies* 2, no. 2 (2001), 279; Guo Qin, "Perceptions of News Value: A Comparative Research between China and the United States," *China Media Research* 8, no. 2 (2012), 29.
[52] Janet Steele, "Justice and Journalism: Islam and Journalistic Values in Indonesia and Malaysia," *Journalism* 12, no. 5 (2011), 543-45; Lawrence Pintak and Jeremy Ginges, "The Mission of Arab Journalism: Creating Change in a Time of Turmoil," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 13, no. 3 (2008), 170-72; Lawrence Pintak and Budi Setiyono, "The Mission of Indonesian Journalism: Balancing Democracy, Development, and Islamic Values," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 16, no. 2 (2011), 200-03; Claudia Mellado et al., "The Pre-Socialization of Future Journalists," *Journalism Studies* 14, no. 6 (2013), 857-74. The classic article on news as a determinant of reality was Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester, "News as Purposive Behavior: On the Strategic Use of Routine Events, Accidents, and Scandals," *American Sociological Review* 39 (1974), 101-12. In the light of 'fake news', however, there is now a defence of realist news being mounted, see Yigal Godler, "Why Anti-Realist Views Persist in Communication Research: A Political Economic Reflection on Relativism's Prominence," *Critical Sociology* 44, no. 1 (2018), 107-25.
[53] Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, "Western Media Systems in Comparative Perspective," in *Media and Society*, ed. James Curran (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 106-10.

Feminist media studies have persistently shown structural biases of gender, race and class in the media, casting doubt on the objectivity of journalists.[54] Professionalism in journalism involves the construction of the "objective view." It is, however, easier for a man to be seen to be "objective" than a woman, if only because a man's point of view is taken to be universal.[55] Michael S. Kimmel illustrates this gender-blindness in the introduction to a handbook on gender. He discovered his complicity during an exchange between a black and a white woman. The white woman related that she saw a woman in the mirror, the black woman a black woman, while Kimmel interjected that he (presumably a white man) just saw a person.[56] If a man's (particular) viewpoint colours the story, it is invisible – if a woman's viewpoint colours the story, she is being subjective. Tellingly, in almost all the in-depth stories of exemplary journalism in David Randall's *The Universal Journalist*, the universal journalist is male.[57]

This subjectivity is visible when assessing whether a journalist possesses "news sense", or "news values."[58] Writing on news values, in a handbook for journalists, Dierdre O'Neill and Tony Harcup cite British news editor Harold Evans as saying that journalists learn news values through the College of Osmosis.[59] Karen Ross and Cynthia Carter also argue that the Global Media Monitoring Project, a five-yearly assessment of where women are in the news, continues to demonstrate that women are sidelined through the "'masculine' norms and values of journalistic practice."[60] In the last two decades, various studies have focused on examining differences between men and women, such as how they interact with sources, their ethical concerns, or their concepts of the news.[61] Rather than

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[54] See e.g. Karen Ross and Cynthia Carter, "Women and News: A Long and Winding Road," *Media, Culture & Society* 33, no. 8 (2011), 1148-65; Paula Skidmore, "Gender and the Agenda: News Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse," in *News, Gender and Power*, ed. Cynthia Carter, Gill Branston, and Stuart Allan (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 1998), 207-08.

[55] This applies in other fields, see e.g. Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 179-92.

[56] Michael S. Kimmel, *The Gendered Society*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9-10.

[57] Randall, *The Universal Journalist*.

[58] This is in part due to the vagueness of the concepts as traditionally used. See Monika Bednarek and Helen Caple, *News Discourse*, Continuum Discourse Series (London; New York: Continuum International Pub. Group, 2012), 40-41.

[59] Deirdre O'Neill and Tony Harcup, "News Values and Selectivity," in *Handbook of Journalism Studies*, ed. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch (New York: Routledge, 2008), 162. In his book, Harold Evans begins with a list of *dramatis personae*, in which women are notably absent. Harold Evans, *Good Times, Bad Times*, 5th ed. (Sevenoaks: Coronet Books, 1986), 13-16.

[60] Ross and Carter, "Women and News," 1149.

[61] Stephanie Craft and Wayne Wanta, "Women in the Newsroom: Influences of Female Editors and Reporters on the News Agenda," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (2004), 124-38; Shelly Rodgers and Esther Thorson, "A Socialization Perspective on Male and Female Reporting," *Journal of Communication* 53, no. 4 (2003), 664-9; Kyung-Hee Kim and Youngmin Yoon, "The Influence of Journalists' Gender on Newspaper Stories About Women Cabinet Members in South Korea," *Asian Journal of Communication* 19, no.

focusing on the differences that exist in the ways "men" and "women" work, I frame this as an issue of masculine hegemony, rather than one of "female difference." There is a "male" style (not necessarily the style of all men) that has been taken as the norm, and deviation from this is seen as imposing subjectivity or bias upon the audience. I address this gap, between the "male" style of journalism and the lived experiences of journalists in a Malaysian context, looking at how the women I interview perform "news" and "news values". One of the insights here is the diversity of ways in which women fashioned news values (see Chapter Three), particularly the divergence between women in the malestream editorial sections (politics and domestic news) and those working on the women's or entertainment pages. Further, my research shows that the processes of professionalisation can be used as a tool for journalists to negotiate with editors to advocate for stories.[62]

Other than news values, news room culture has also been cited as undermining women (and minorities), derailing their ability to develop a coherent career path.[63] There has been an evolving debate on how far numbers of women in the newsroom affect news coverage and change news room culture. Through the 1980s, feminist media scholars often assumed that as women's numbers in the newsroom increased, sexism and sexist portrayals of women in the media would decrease.[64] In the 1990s (in Malaysia like elsewhere, if for different reasons), the number of women in journalism schools, and working as entry level journalists rose dramatically, in some countries outnumbering their male counterparts.[65] Nonetheless, problems in the portrayal of women, and the lack of women featured in the news, remained.[66] Randal Beam and Damon Di Cicco show that at the level of editor,

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3 (2009), 298-9; Tanja Bosch, "Gender in South African Newsrooms," *Journal of African Media Studies* 8, no. 3 (2016), 299-301.

[62] While there is an obvious difference between professionalism and ethics in the context of conventional usage, in newsrooms there is significant overlap between the two, with ethics being a subset of conventions that make up the behaviour of a "professional" journalist.

[63] For a summary on women, see Carolyn Kitch, "Women in the Newsroom," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 92, no. 1 (2015), 35-8. On black women, see, eg, Rodger Streitmatter, Raising Her Voice: African-American Women Journalists Who Changed History, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 144-6.

[64] Neil Hickey, "A Rising Tide for Women," *Columbia Journalism Review* 2000, 55; Liesbet van Zoonen, "One of the Girls? The Changing Gender of Journalism," in *News, Gender and Power*, ed. Cynthia Carter, Gill Branston, and Stuart Allan (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 1998), 33-46.

[65] Gertrude J. Robinson, "The 'Glass Ceiling' and Its Effects on Women's Media Careers in Canada and the United States," *Gender, journalism and equity: Canadian, U.S. and European Perspectives* (New York: Hampton Press, 2005), 95-96; Prahastiwi Utari and Pamela Nilan, "The Lucky Few: Female Graduates of Communication Studies in the Indonesian Media Industry," *Asia Pacific Media Educator* 15 (2004), 63-79.

[66] Sarah Macharia, O'Connor Dermot, and Lilian Ndangam, "Who Makes the News?," (London; Toronto: World Association for Christian Communication, 2010), 7-21; George Spears and Kasia Seydegart, "Who Makes the News? Global Media Monitoring Project 2000," (London: World Association for Christian Communication, 2000), 13-18.

gender is largely irrelevant, suggesting that to rise through the ranks, malestream values are internalised.[67] Rosalind Gill demonstrates that while women editors may choose news and frame news in the same way as their male counterparts, female journalists gather news differently.[68] Further, Paula Skidmore shows that women in the newsroom make a difference in the reporting of issues such as child sexual abuse.[69] While the majority of these studies are in Western newsrooms, Prahastiwi Utari and Pam Nilan show that both of these effects are also seen in Indonesia.[70] Thus, while processes of professionalisation may iron out differences at senior levels, there are substantive differences between the ways in which male and female reporters operate and define news. Alternatively, the hegemonic (White) male lens is less apparent at levels other than that of editor. These insights are partly supported by my research, which interrogates the differences between women working in different parts of the newspaper, in particular those who are given an authorised voice and those relegated to the women's pages.[71]

It can be argued that this debate on the impact of professionalism is spurious when looking at newsrooms in Malaysia, where journalists were highly conscious of the need, legally as well as professionally, to toe the government line. Academic Faridah Ibrahim asserts that the majority of Malaysian journalists prefer to work "from within the form of self-censorship".[72] In the Malay-language media, the distinction between the needs of the Umno and the needs of the people was forcibly eradicated in 1961 following the failure of the Utusan strike.[73] From here on, the Malay-language press had to maintain that there was an identity between the needs of (particularly) Malay society and the Umno, which owned and controlled the paper. Top media appointments in Malaysia are highly political. Taken together, this history shows that journalists were not respected as professionals able to organise themselves in the interests of society. This politicisation of appointments undermines both professionalism and independence within the newsroom.

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[67] Randal A. Beam and Damon T. Di Cicco, "When Women Run the Newsroom: Management Change, Gender, and the News," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 87, no. 2 (2010), 393-411.
[68] Rosalind Gill, *Gender and the Media* (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2007), 113-4.
[69] Skidmore, "Gender and the Agenda," 213-15. See also Tracy Everbach and Craig Flournoy, "Women Leave Journalism for Better Pay, Work Conditions," *Newspaper Research Journal* 28, no. 3 (2007), 52-64; Jane Rhodes, "Journalism in the New Millennium: What's a Feminist to Do?," *Feminist Media Studies* 1, no. 1 (2001), 49-53.
[70] Utari and Nilan, "The Lucky Few."
[71] Such as Rosnah Majid, interviewed 18 February 2014, Kuala Lumpur; compared with women's page journalist Zaharani Asran, interviewed 27 February 2014, Kuala Lumpur.
[72] Faridah Ibrahim, "Press Freedom and Ethics with Accountability: Premises and Constraints," in *International Conference cum Workshop on Free and Responsible Journalism* (Port Dickson: Ministry of Information, Communications and Culture, Malaysia, 2010), 3.
[73] Zahari, *Dark Clouds at Dawn*, 266-71.

Useful in understanding the complexity in these relations is Tong Jingrong's analysis of the media in China, which examines the role self-censorship plays in the press.[74] Tong looks at how self-censorship helps Chinese newspapers balance the varying concerns of audiences, the government and public interest. He argues that self-censorship allows newspaper editors to raise sensitive social concerns without running the risk of jeopardising licenses and relations with the authorities, and that this is vital for their ongoing economic viability. As Jonathan Becker points out, there is a need to be wary of seeing the media in all authoritarian systems as the same.[75] In Malaysia, in contrast with China, economic imperatives were not used to justify the existence of the press, particularly the Malay-language press, which has had falling circulation figures for over a decade.[76] Rather, the press' function was to aid development.[77] There is a difference in the interaction between journalists and society in different contexts. Cherian George posits various reasons for the combined longevity and popularity (measured by readership figures) of the Singaporean press, despite stringent government controls.[78] Two reasons he cites are the general reliability of the Singaporean media and its predictable bias. Neither of these has been present in the Malaysian media. The bias of the news organisations is unpredictable, a claim made by then-former Prime Minister Mahathir.[79] With changing perceptions of political favour, issues and people become more prominent or sidelined (see Chapter Six in particular). Thus, the conditions in Malaysia were very different to those in China (or Russia, or even Singapore). Nonetheless, in the period being examined, the newspapers were widely read, perhaps because the bias of the papers closely matched society's political preferences, as reflected in the 1990 and 1995 election results.

Complementary to the more Western-inspired notions of the role of journalists examined above is the notion of the "development journalist". As Wong Kokkeong notes, Malaysia is among the more outspoken advocates of development journalism.[80] This form of journalism has been posited as a post-colonial response to concerns about the impact of a sensationalised, market-driven media in

[74] Tong Jingrong, "Press Self-Censorship in China: A Case Study in the Transformation of Discourse," *Discourse & Society* 20, no. 5 (2009), 593-612.
[75] Jonathan Becker, "Lessons from Russia," *European Journal of Communication* 19, no. 2 (2004), 139-63.
[76] Figures from the Audited Bureau of Circulation 2010.
[77] Losses were absorbed by the broad media conglomerate. In contrast, see Maidin, *Di Depan Api, Di Belakang Duri*, 12-16.
[78] Cherian George, "Credibility Deficits," *Journalism Studies* 8, no. 6 (2007), 898-908.
[79] Mahathir was re-elected as Prime Minister in May 2018, having left the Umno. This claim was made during his time outside office. Mahathir Mohamad to Chedet.cc, 2 September 2012, 2008.
[80] Wong, "Asian-Based Development Journalism and Political Elections."

developing countries: What was needed was an approach that put the development needs of the people first.[81] Bala A. Musa and Jerry K. Domatob argue that a non-adversarial relationship between the media and government has been necessary because developing countries could not afford "the luxury of a muckracking, adversarial press".[82] Yet, as Wong notes, critics say that development journalism "became vulnerable to government manipulation."[83] Thus, journalists schooled in development journalism, in theory, view news from the point of view of how it helps the country "develop". In Malaysia, the theory was interpreted as prioritising the news agenda of the government. In these circumstances, it reinforced the difficulty journalists had in conducting independent or investigative journalism, though I show that this applied more to the malestream sections of the newspaper than the features or women's pages.

Development journalism places a greater emphasis on stories related to peace, to human interest, and socio-economic development (as opposed to stories on conflict), which are less likely to be reserved for the male journalist (unlike, for example, crime).[84] Unfortunately, there has been little research specifically about whether development journalism has helped improve the visibility or careers of women journalists, though countries that claim to practice development journalism do not seem to have substantially different numbers of women at senior levels. The five-yearly Global Media Monitoring Project, for example, does not show any progress made by women in countries professing to practice or encourage development journalism, also reflected in the work of many academic studies.[85]

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[81] Mustapha Masmoudi, "The New World Information Order," *Journal of Communication* 29, no. 2 (1979), 172-9; Bala A. Musa and Jerry Komia Domatob, "Who Is a Development Journalist? Perspectives on Media Ethics and Professionalism in Post-Colonial Societies," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 22, no. 4 (2007), 315-31. Cf Ahmad Murad Merican, "Development Journalism: What's New?," *Jurnal Komunikasi* 3 (1987), 99-108.
[82] Musa and Domatob, "Who Is a Development Journalist?," 324.
[83] Wong, "Asian-Based Development Journalism and Political Elections," 27.
[84] For news as gendered see, e.g., van Zoonen, *Feminist Media Studies*, 49-53; Cory Armstrong, "The Influence of Reporter Gender on Source Selection in Newspaper Stories," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (2004), 139-54; Bosch, "Gender in South African Newsrooms."
[85] Macharia, "Global Media Monitoring Project 2015," 8; Macharia, Dermot, and Ndangam, "Who Makes the News?," vii-x; Spears and Seydegart, "Who Makes the News?," 15; Noha Mellor, "'More Than a Parrot' - the Case of Saudi Women Journalists," *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research* 3, no. iii (2010), 207-22; Maria Zuiderveld, "'Hitting the Glass Ceiling' - Gender and Media Management in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal of African Media Studies* 3, no. 3 (2011), 401-15; Leela Rao, "Facets of Media and Gender Studies in India," *Feminist Media Studies* 1, no. 1 (2001), 45-8; Margaret Gallagher, *Women and Media Decision-Making: The Invisible Barriers* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1989).

The Malaysian media practiced a top-down means of communication.[86] As I illustrate in this thesis, the media was not, however, monolithic, even in its reflection of the Umno, although the influence of Umno was pervasive in the leader pages.[87] At times, the Malaysian government exercised strict control over media content, for example during elections, but this control was not consistently exercised and did different work in different parts of the paper (see Chapter Six). Outside of elections, or similarly politically sensitive events, editors and journalists had more leeway (I hesitate to use the word freedom) to choose which messages to highlight. The press has been constrained by *BN* policy in as far as that policy has been articulated, and in as far as there is consistency and agreement within the *BN* itself. Yet, a lot of both political and social life lies outside these areas, and in this thesis I examine what is happening in these margins.

The impact of this discourse of professionalism on journalists, and particularly women journalists, in Malaysia needs to be critically examined: how far do values of professionalism constrain or guide behaviour? How far are they seen as being alien to a Malaysian way of journalism? How do women's values and methods of finding news differ from their male colleagues in Malaysia, if at all? Are these differences a construct of gender, or are there other explanations? Is the contrast between the predominantly White male news positions analysed in the studies above substantively different in Malaysia, within the limits of the Malay-language newsroom? These questions inform my thesis, and informed the questions I posed during the oral histories with respondents. I argue there have been contradictory forces at work, between the processes of professionalisation and the political forces at work in the newsroom.

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[86] Mustafa K. Anuar, "'Muzzled'? The Media in Mahathir's Malaysia," in *Reflections: The Mahathir Years*, ed. Bridget Welsh (Washington, DC: Southeast Asia Studies Program The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced Studies John Hopkins University, 2004), 486-93; Nain and Wang, "Ownership, Control and the Malaysian Media"; Weiss, "Parsing the Power of 'New Media' in Malaysia"; Sharaad Kuttan, "'Inciting/ Exciting' Democracy: Civil Society and Political Ferment," in *Elections and Democracy in Malaysia*, ed. Mavis Puthucheary and Norani Othman (Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2005), 164.

[87] Umi Manickam Khattab, "Bogeyman's Coming? Representation and Regulation of Malaysia's Aids Campaigns," *Jurnal Komunikasi* 17 (2001), 175-85; Faridah Ibrahim et al., "Images and Issues of Superpowers: An Analysis of International News Coverage by the Government-Owned News Agency, Bernama in Four National Dailies in Malaysia," *The Innovation Journal: The public sector innovation journal* 16, no. 3 (2011), 2-15.

Hegemony, women journalists and the women's/ lifestyle pages

Gaye Tuchman's landmark 1978 work on symbolic annihilation continues to influence debate on the presence of women in the media.[88] Tuchman argues that the absence, and limited portrayals, of women erased them as individuals from the culture. Not only were women absent from the newsroom where she did her sociological fieldwork, but she argues that this absence was reflected in the types and ways in which stories were reported.[89] Women's concerns and lived experiences were absent from the newspapers, which reinforced their absence from the political agenda, a reflection and entrenching of existing power relations.[90] While important, this examination elides the ways those few women in the newsroom, including in the women's pages, were attempting to both work within and disrupt these loci. Thus, in contrast, to Tuchman's focus on the male locus of power, this thesis focuses on how the news produced by and for women is constrained (or not) by predominantly male elites.

More recent historical work on the role of feminist journalists, particularly those in the "women's" or "lifestyle" pages of the newspapers has re-examined the role of these women, and their importance to the feminist movement. As discussed in the Introduction, Bernadette Barker-Plummer explores the dialogic nature of the relationship between women journalists who identified, to some extent, with the 1970s' women's liberation movement, and the movement itself.[91] Barker-Plummer's exposition of the tensions faced by these journalists, who were attempting to establish themselves as professionals on an equal footing with their male colleagues while trying to cover the women's movement, seen as interlopers by all sides, resonates with the experiences of women journalists in Malaysia.[92] Barker-Plummer shows how the women journalists were simultaneously part of the power structure of the news organisation, while remaining at the margins within the organisation itself.[93] I consider whether key ideas were presented differently in the parts of the paper controlled by women, compared with both Umno policy and the malestream voices of the paper.[94] The points of contrast and the different

[88] Gaye Tuchman, "Introduction: The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media," in *Hearth & Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*, ed. Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels, and James Benet (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 3-38.
[89] Gaye Tuchman, "The Technology of Objectivity: Doing 'Objective' TV News Film," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 2 (1973): 4-5; Gaye Tuchman, "Making News by Doing Work: Routinizing the Unexpected," *American Journal of Sociology* 79, no. 1 (1973), 110-31.
[90] Gaye Tuchman, "Women's Depiction by the Mass Media," *Signs* 4, no. 3 (1979): 533.
[91] Barker-Plummer, "News and Feminism," 146.
[92] Barker-Plummer, "News and Feminism," 148-60.
[93] This is shown, for example, by their choosing between "radical" and "reasonable" feminist groups, Barker-Plummer, "News and Feminism," 159-60.
[94] See Chapter Five.

ways in which journalists in the US and Malaysia react to similar phenomena illustrate the importance of context and cultural awareness in analysing women's experiences in the newsroom. Barker-Plummer and others, such as Kimberly Wilmott Voss, argue for a re-evaluation of the feminist work of women's page editors.[95] Voss makes this point through the close reading of the careers of three prominent US women's page editors, but notes that many women's pages and their editors fit into the stereotype of being "little more than society and homemaking sections, containing stories about elite social events, photos of brides from wealthy families, and household hints of varying worth."[96] Thus, both of these analyses separate "real" news, that of the feminist movement and women in politics, from the fluff that makes up the majority of women's pages.[97]

There has, however, been a surge in research on "fluff" and, more broadly, pop culture, beginning with the work of the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies in the UK, from the late 1980s, and its re-positioning of mass culture as fodder for academic scholarship. In terms of the media, this movement traces its history back to analyses of comics or soap operas.[98] More recently, Fran Martin's analysis of Taiwanese "variety television" shows how they fashion women's lives, helping to ameliorate risks associated with gendered modernisation; Erin Meyers examines surveillance through baby bumps in gossip blogs; and Lisa Dalton et al examine the role of religion in *The Simpsons*.[99] Within news, the

[95] Voss, "Redefining Women's News," 2-10; Guenin, "Women's Pages in American Newspapers."; Nicholas van Hoffman, "Women's Pages: An Irreverent View," *Columbia Journalism Review* 1971, 52-4; Miller, "Changes in Women's/ Lifestyle Sections."

[96] Voss, "Redefining Women's News," 5.

[97] Taking the term from Streitmatter, "No Taste for Fluff." See also Yang Mei-Ling, "Women's Pages or People's Pages"; Nancy W. Gakahu and Lynette Lusike Mukhongo, "'Women's Pages' in Kenya's Newspapers: Implications for the Country's Development," *Gender and Development* 15, no. 3 (2007), 425-34. I have deliberately chosen to use the word "fluff" rather than less perjorative terms such as "soft news", because the former indicates the disdain in which women journalists and academics have often held the women's pages. Further, while there are ongoing debates on how to draw the line between hard and soft news, soft news encompasses a wider range of material. See, e.g., Helle Sjøvaag, "Hard News/ Soft News: The hierarchy of genres and the boundary of the profession", in *Boundaries of Journalism: Professionalism, Practices and Participation*, ed. Matt Carlson and Seth C. Lewis (Oxford, New York; Taylor & Francis Books, 2015), 101-117.

[98] Armand Mattelart, *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic* (New York: I.G. Editions, 1971); Ien Ang, *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*, trans. Della Couling (Amsterdam; Oxford; New York: Uitgeverij SUA; Routledge, 1985).

[99] Fran Martin, "'A Tangle of People Messing around Together'," *Cultural Studies* 27, no. 2 (2012), 207-24; Erin Meyers, "Gossip Blogs and 'Baby Bumps': The New Visual Spectacle of Female Celebrity in Gossip Media," in *The Handbook of Gender, Sex and Media*, ed. Karen Ross (Malden; Oxford; Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 53-70; Lisa Dalton, Eric Michael Mazur, and Monica Siems, "Homer the Heretic and Charlie Church: Parody, Piety and Pluralism in *The Simpsons*," in *God in the Details: American Religion in Popular Culture*, ed. Eric Michael Mazur and Kate McCarthy (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2011), 231-54. In turn, there has been backlash, such as on whether this work contributes to the project of cultural studies as a progressive discipline interested in political change. See Graeme Turner, *What's Become of Cultural Studies?* (Los Angeles; London; New Delhi; Singapore; Washington DC: Sage, 2012), 4-7, 37; David Morley, "Cultural Studies, Common Sense and Communications," *Cultural Studies* 29, no. 1 (2014), 23-31; Dick Hebdige, "The Worldliness of Cultural Studies," *Cultural Studies* 29, no. 1 (2014), 32-42.

research on the women's, sports and entertainment pages is part of this considered attention to popular media genres. Examples include Sonia Bathla's book on how "women's news", including the women's pages, in India helped to maintain a Brahminical cultural consensus and hegemony;[100] David Gudelunas' book on the role of US advice columns in discussing and renewing sexual mores;[101] and Robert Scott's analysis of the role of arts journalists in British culture.[102] In this thesis, I am specifically interested in how the fluff of the society and homemaking sections of the newspapers establish the Malay woman and her relationship with the political sphere, by examining the changing norms of both a neoliberal and a Muslim subject. Thus, this project is unique in examining the articles in the women's pages and the work that they do beyond women performing as wives and mothers.

Comparatively little work has been done on the construction of women in the mainstream Malay-language newspapers. Sara Niner et al analyse the coverage of child abuse in two English-language newspapers, for example, which looks at the divergence in the construction of good mothers and bad mothers who neglect their children, with implications for the narration of the Malaysian state and (Malay) womanhood.[103] Niner et al's article goes beyond quantitative analysis, to investigate the work being done by frames for the newspaper articles examined, but in an English-language rather than Malay-language newspaper. In general, however, analysis of the Malaysian media sheds little light on the processes by which these frames are decided upon and contested, eliding the work that journalists do. For this reason, the press appears more monolithic than it really is. Further, no studies to date focus on the women's pages of the Malaysian newspapers, despite increasing use of feminist frameworks. Examples of the use of feminist frameworks in a Malaysian context include Md Azlanshah Md Syed's analysis of Malay women's viewing of soap operas and Saodah Wok and Shafizan Mohd's research into the impact of TV and magazines on women's dress.[104] Various scholars, in particular Maila Stivens, look at how the state has constructed the Malay woman, though few examine the role

[100] Sonia Bathla, "Women, Democracy, and Media : An Exploration of the Indian Cultural Context" (University of Leicester, 1996).
[101] David Gudelunas, "Talking Taboo: Newspaper Advice Columns and Sexual Discourse," *Sexuality & Culture*, no. 1 (2005), 62-87.
[102] Robert Dawson Scott, "Bridging the Cultural Gap: How Arts Journalists Decide What Gets onto the Arts and Entertainment," *Critical Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (1999), 46-55.
[103] Sara Niner, Denise Cuthbert, and Yarina Ahmad, "Good Mothers, Bad Mothers," *Feminist Media Studies* 14, no. 6 (2013), 993-1011.
[104] Md Azalanshah Md Syed, "Malay Women as Discerning Viewers: Asian Soap Operas, Consumer Culture and Negotiating Modernity," *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 20, no. 5 (2013), 647-63; Saodah Wok and Shafizan Mohd, "The Impact of TV and Magazines on Fashion and Dressing of Urban Women of Different Ages," *Jurnal Pengajian Media Malaysia* 10, no. 1 (2008), 157-70.

of the media as closely as Tabitha Frith's report on Malay female identity.[105] Frith identifies the main themes in the Malay-language women's magazines to be women as (successful) consumers, femininity and "middle classness".[106] These results are significantly different from my own, I surmise due to the different medium, different target audience (including advertisers) and different loci of power within the respective newsrooms. Wang Lay Kim has noted both the absence of women in decision-making roles in the Malaysian media, and the discrimination they face in the newsroom, citing the experiences of one journalist.[107] There has also been more recent research on Malaysian women journalists, such as Tiung Lee Kuok et al's survey of 12 female journalists working in the East Malaysian state of Sabah, which found, contrary to my own findings, that there was no discrimination in the newsroom.[108] I argue in the next chapter that a close reading of the responses shows there was a denial of discrimination, rather than a lack of discrimination. Utari and Nilan have examined the work done by Indonesian women journalists, their career paths and the challenges they face both in current and New Order Indonesia.[109] While they do not take up questions of how women journalists in the women's pages work, they provide analogous material on the working conditions faced by women journalists.[110] Many of their findings are echoed in the stories told by women journalists in Chapter Three. My research complements these studies by providing more in-depth interviews with women journalists, but concentrates primarily on the impact that they have within newsrooms in both shaping the agenda and influencing wider discourse, while recognising the importance of the discrimination they face.

Nafise Motlagh et al examine whether ethical standards differ between male and female journalists in Malaysia, using a questionnaire based upon scenarios derived from the National Union of Journalists' (NUJ) code of ethics.[111] They discover that journalists make "unfair" decisions in more than half of the cases, that is, decisions differing from the ethics prescribed by the NUJ. The methodology

[105] Stivens, "'Family Values' and Islamic Revival"; Maila Stivens, "White Babies and Global Embodiments in Malaysia and Singapore," *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, no. 23 (2010), 1-16; Stivens, "Sex, Gender and the Making of the New Malay Middle Class"; Frith, "Constructing Malay Muslim Womanhood in Malaysia."
[106] Frith, "Constructing Malay Muslim Womanhood in Malaysia," 21-3.
[107] Wang, "Ways of Seeing Malaysian Women."
[108] Tiung Lee Kuok et al., "Women in Journalism World: Profession, Prospect and Future in Newspaper Industry in Sabah," *Malaysian Journal of Media Studies* 14, no. 2 (2012), 13-26.
[109] Pamela Nilan and Prahastiwi Utari, "Meanings of Work for Female Media and Communications Workers," in *Women and Work in Indonesia*, ed. Michele Ford and Lyn Parker (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), 136-54; Utari and Nilan, "The Lucky Few."
[110] Utari and Nilan, "The Lucky Few," 71-73.
[111] Nafise E. Motlagh et al., "Role of Journalists' Gender, Work Experience and Education in Ethical Decision Making," *Asian Social Science* 9, no. 9 (2013), 1-10. See also Tiung et al., "Women in Journalism World."

restricts responses as the journalists could only provide multiple choice answers, which elicits both numerous and interesting responses but does not probe the decision-making process or alternative values that might be pertinent. In contrast, Janet Steele's investigation into how Islamic values influence (male) journalists in Malaysia and Indonesia makes use of more open-ended questions and helps to establish that while journalists may not have heard of (as Motlagh et al note) the NUJ code of ethics, they are likely to use religious justifications when framing the ethical dilemmas they face as journalists.[112] For example, Steele documents the connection between the universal journalistic value of verification of information and sources with the Islamic scrutiny of the *isnad* (providence) of *hadiths* (practices/ sayings of the Prophet).[113] While Steele is looking specifically at the connections between "universal values" and Islamic values in journalism, her respondents make no reference to the NUJ code of ethics, underscoring the difference between the informal codes that journalists formulate themselves, and those formulated at an industry level. Both these surveys help to establish the ethical frameworks within which Malaysian journalists operate. My research builds on these studies to examine whether these values evolved over time, and how they impacted upon the work of women journalists. Through this analysis, I improve understanding of how conflicts between professional ethics and the imperatives of reporting arose and were resolved in an authoritarian context; and how this dynamic provided both constraints and opportunities for the women working on the women's pages in Malaysia.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the salience of media hegemony as a frame for examining the Malaysian media. In Malaysia, legislation and the government's priorities defined boundaries within which there was scope for journalists to seek out and define an agenda, as will be explored further in the next two chapters. Different parts of the newspaper are more constrained than others, and how these constraints affected the women's pages will also be explored more in following chapters.

Further, this chapter locates this thesis in literature on the Malaysian media, providing unique insights on the role of women and the women's pages in the newsroom, how they frame their professional practice and the ways in which this impacts upon their construction of "the Malay-Muslim woman." It also builds upon recent work exploring the role the women's pages play in the United States, by

[112] Steele, "Justice and Journalism."
[113] Steele, "Justice and Journalism," 539.

providing not only a non-Western context for the research, but also a different perspective in terms of the distinct role the women's pages play in an authoritarian state.

In the following chapter, I discuss the twin methodologies used to explore the women's pages, triangulating information from oral histories with the articles published in the two newspapers being analysed. I build the framework which I use in subsequent chapters to present evidence showing the media in Malaysia was not monolithic; and begin to demonstrate that the women's pages were perceived as a non-party political space; and that the women's pages in Malaysia escaped the hegemonic influence seen in the religion and leader pages.

Chapter Two: Challenging and constructing hegemony in the newsrooms, a methodology

This thesis studies historical changes in the depiction of Malay-Muslim women through critical discourse analysis of both oral histories and newspaper articles. Combining these sources allows me to triangulate information provided in the oral histories with the work journalists were doing. Thus, the analysis of articles looks at how the journalists were narrating their readers, but also how they were engaged in dialogue with the "malestream" editors within the paper. I draw on feminist media studies and critical discourse analysis to uncover the ways in which power relations within the newsroom were gendered and how content portrayed the "ideal Malay woman".[1]

In the context of media analysis, my methodology mirrors Jenny Kitzinger's analysis of sexual abuse coverage and the "British False Memory Syndrome."[2] Kitzinger spoke to female reporters, complemented with content analysis to uncover how news outlets privileged male perspectives in their coverage of child sexual abuse during the 1990s. More recent research that follows a similar methodology of complementing analysis of articles with interviews was used by Phansansiri Kularb in her thesis on the role of the media in framing the conflict in Southern Thailand, since violence began in 2007.[3] Through a mixture of content analysis, interviews and ethnographic research, she examines how and why elite voices and interpretations have been privileged. Further, my methodology

[1] This idea has been explored in other contexts, e.g. Duman, "Gender Politics in Turkey and the Role of Women's Magazines"; Sharifah Fazliyaton Shaik Ismail, "In Pursuit of Mr. Right: Constructed Masculinities in Malay Teen Magazines," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 155 (2014), 477-83; Mary Jane Kehily, "More Sugar? Teenage Magazines, Gender Displays and Sexual Learning," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 2, no. 1 (1999), 65-89; Angela McRobbie, "Just Like a *Jackie* Story," in *Feminism for Girls : An Adventure Story*, ed. Angela McRobbie and Trisha McCabe (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 1981 (2013)), 120-37.

[2] Jenny Kitzinger, "The Gender-Politics of News Production: Silenced Voices and False Memories," in *News, Gender and Power*, ed. Cynthia Carter, Gill Branston, and Stuart Allan (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 186-203.

[3] Phansasiri Kularb, "Mediating Poltical Dissent: A Study of Thai News Organisations and Southern Conflict Reporting" (University of Cardiff, 2013), 7-8. See also Emma Mesikämmen, "Limited Interests, Resources, Voices: Power Relations in Mainstream News Coverage of Indigenous Policy in Australia," *Media, Culture & Society* 38, no. 5 (2016),721-37; Awan Ismail, "Exploring the Strengths and Limitations of Development Journalism in Malaysia" (University of Adelaide, 2013); Tong Jingrong, "The Defence of Journalistic Legitimacy in Media Discourse in China: An Analysis of the Case of Deng Yujiao," *Journalism* 16, no. 3 (2014), 429-46; Peter English, "Mapping the Sports Journalism Field: Bourdieu and Broadsheet Newsrooms," *Journalism* 17, no. 8 (2015), 1001-17.

resonates with historians' combining oral history with other texts to establish their context, their inconsistencies and to inform analysis of widely divergent events.[4]

My research analyses newspaper content over a sustained period of time. Thus, I ascertain changes that took place in the content and style of the women's pages, examined through the two major themes of Islamisation and neoliberalism. As noted earlier, this research contributes to understanding how the "fluff" of women's pages constructs women beyond stereotypes.[5] This thesis examines a period of comparative calm (1987-1998), but a period when deep-seated changes were occurring in the fashioning of the Malay-Muslim woman in the newspapers. To be manageable within the time frame of the thesis, I chose to look at six months at the beginning and end of the period, six months in 1996, as well as one month (March) in each year for the other eight years. Originally, I planned to look at six months in the middle of the period (1993), but the campaign for the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act was launched in 1996, making this year more appropriate. This period was also important because of its proximity to the Fourth World Conference on Women, in September 1995, which was frequently mentioned both in the women's pages and by political leaders.[6] The month of March was chosen as this holds no stationary festivals, and coincides with International Women's Day, which began to be of significance towards the end of the period I am studying.

Analysis of articles alone, however, sheds little light on the power relations within the newsroom and the position women journalists, particularly those on the women's pages, occupy vis-à-vis malestream editorial power. The interviews with journalists helped uncover how and why women's pages and their relationship to power were different from other parts of the paper. In terms of the oral histories, this chapter does three things. First, it sets out how I use the analysis of the articles, second, assesses the constraints of how my interviews were conceived and recorded, and lastly provides the context

[4] E.g. Janis Wilton, "Imaging Family Memories: My Mum, Her Photographs, Our Memories," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 267-80; Mark Roseman, "Surviving Memory: Truth and Inaccuracy in Holocaust Testimony," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 320-33.
[5] The women's pages as fluff is used in Streitmatter, "No Taste for Fluff"; Vicky Ball, "The 'Feminization' of British Television and the Re-Traditionalization of Gender," *Feminist Media Studies* 12, no. 2 (2011), 254-5. In contrast see Therese L. Lueck and Huayun Chang, "Tribune's 'Womennews' Gives Voice to Women's Issues," *Newspaper Research Journal* 23, no. 1 (2002), 59-72; Kimberly Wilmot Voss, "Dorothy Jurney: A National Advocate for Women's Pages as They Evolved and Then Disappeared," *Journalism History* 36, no. 1 (2010), 13-22; Golia, "Courting Women, Courting Advertisers."
[6] E.g. Malaysia, *Parliamentary Debates*, Dewan Rakyat, 1 November 1995, 33-4 (Dani Haji Isahak).

within which the respondents were contacted and other factors relevant to evaluating their testimony.

Textual analysis: Feminist media studies and critical discourse analysis

This research examines how power, the "capacity to bring about outcomes", circulates in the Malay-language newsroom and how women journalists were involved in this circulation.[7] I draw on feminist media studies' rich history of critical textual and content analysis.[8] Feminist media studies primarily consists of studying all forms of media as though women matter, analysing the presence and absence of women (and men) and the implications for gender equality. Liesbet van Zoonen's seminal monograph *Feminist Media Studies*, for example, semiotically analyses media texts.[9] She illustrates how news, advertising and entertainment media and the structures that generate them (such as newsrooms) worked to perpetuate gender stereotypes. News analysis is also often seen as the hallmark of cultural studies, such as Maggie Wykes' analysis of the coverage of the serial killers Rose and Fred West.[10] She examines how journalists downplayed the "family" as a site of violence, instead focusing on the exceptionalism of the case, particularly pathologising the nature of Rose West.[11] This example illustrates how analysing news articles can be powerful, particularly when it places texts within a broader context, in this case of silence regarding the family as a site of violence, particularly gender-based violence. Here, there is a close association between textual analysis and the uncovering of implicit stereotypes and assumptions.

Analysis of newspapers has also benefited from developments in linguistics, particularly the increasing awareness of the construction of news values and the construction of news as discourse in the field of critical discourse analysis (CDA). Discourse analysis has been defined as "the study of language

[7] Steven Lukes, "Power," *Contexts* 6, no. 3 (2007), 59.
[8] See e.g. Danica Minic, "What Makes an Issue a Woman's Hour Issue?," *Feminist Media Studies* 8, no. 3 (2008), 301-15; Shachar, "The Israeli Womb"; Rod Brookes and Beverley Holbrook, "'Mad Cows and Englishmen': Gender Implications of News Reporting on the British Beef Crisis," in *News, Gender and Power*, ed. Cynthia Carter, Gill Branston, and Stuart Allan (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 174-85; Stephanie Patrick, "I Want My Snooki: MTV's Failed Subjects and Post-Feminist Ambivalence in and around the Jersey Shore," *Feminist Media Studies* 17, no. 2 (2017), 181-97.
[9] van Zoonen, *Feminist Media Studies*, 43-86.
[10] Maggie Wykes, "A Family Affair: The British Press, Sex and the Wests," in *News, Gender and Power*, ed. Cynthia Carter, Gill Branston, and Stuart Allan (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 233-47. See also Morley, "Cultural Studies, Common Sense and Communications"; Stuart Hall, "Encoding/ Decoding," in *Media and Cultural Studies: Keyworks*, ed. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner (Malden, MA; Oxford; Carlton, VIC: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 163-73.
[11] Wykes, "A Family Affair," 237-40.

above the level of the sentence".[12] It examines language as both embedded in and influencing societal structures, in an ongoing dynamic process.[13] The aim of CDA is overtly political, "changing the world for the better": By uncovering how power operates in texts, CDA as a discipline aims to help readers resist its influence.[14] The process has been applied to news discourse, and news as a discourse, particularly by Norman Fairclough, who explores how texts, particularly texts related to news, relate to the social context in which they are created.[15] My analysis likewise pays attention to the political and social context of the stories, but, drawing on the work of feminist media scholars, I also pay attention to how newsroom processes have influenced the creation of news texts. This analysis involves cross-referencing developments in, in particular, the women's pages of the newspapers with the information gleaned in the interviews with the journalists.

I have also examined how stories were framed as "women's news". Thus, I ask why editors chose to run stories as "women's page stories", rather than in another section of the paper, or even at all. This aspect of my analysis draws on work led by Monika Bednarek and Helen Caple. Through close attention to linguistics applied in Australian new stories and through reflection on the literature on news values, they examine how journalists make news from disparate, often equally compelling, events.[16] Looking at the variety of ways in which the term "news values" is applied, they suggest that there is a need to distinguish between why a story is being covered and how the story is covered, which have both fallen under the umbrella term "news values".[17] Thus, in my analysis of the articles, I examine how events were sold to an audience as news, given that there were innumerable possible events that could also be framed as news and in particular, what made the stories of the women's pages "women's news", rather than malestream news.

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[12] James Paul Gee and Michael Handford, "Introduction," ed. James Paul Gee and Michael Handford, *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis* (London; New York: Routledge, 2012), 1.
[13] John E. Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 37.
[14] Norman Fairclough, "Critical Discourse Analysis," ed. James Paul Gee and Michael Handford, *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis* (London; New York: Routledge, 2012), 10.
[15] Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 21-38.
[16] E.g. Monika Bednarek, *Evaluation in Media Discourse: Analysis of a Newspaper Corpus*, Corpus and Discourse: Research in Corpus and Discourse (London; New York: Continuum, 2006), 3-10; Bednarek and Caple, *News Discourse*, 40-1; Monika Bednarek and Helen Caple, "'Value Added': Language, Image and News Values," *Discourse, Context & Media* 1, no. 2–3 (2012), 103-13. This work contrasts with the classic method pioneered by Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge, "The Structure of Foreign News: The Presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus Crises in Four Norwegian Newspapers," *Journal of Peace Research* 2, no. 1 (1965), 64-90.
[17] Helen Caple and Monika Bednarek, "Rethinking News Values: What a Discursive Approach Can Tell Us About the Construction of News Discourse and News Photography," *Journalism* 17, no. 4 (2016), 435-55.

Unfortunately, analysis of the women's pages of newspapers often lacks the complexity of analysis done in cultural studies or in critical discourse analysis of newspaper articles.[18] Biography rather than textual analysis is characteristic of most work on the women's pages.[19] In a rare example of analysis outside the Western media, Nancy Gakahu and Lusike Mukhongo examine the women's pages in Kenya.[20] They find that newspaper editors "have achieved the exclusion of women by confining coverage of 'women's issues' to the dedicated women's pages, shutting them off completely from the rest of the paper. In these pages, women's talent, skill, and intelligence are downplayed or completely ignored".[21] This important study could have been enriched with more context, such as the time period covered, or whether bias has changed over time. With this lack of context, the possibility arises that textual analysis reinforced the authors' belief that women were being marginalised. The article illustrates a potential pitfall of textual analysis, that texts can be selectively read to engender the desired results. To avoid this, I have attempted to provide context and looked at the presentation and evolution of themes over time. While women's pages may and did contain a lot of material which contributed to harmful stereotypes of women, analysis of the women's pages should not have this as a premise.

Thus, critical discourse analysis of the women's pages shows potential to yield new insights. To understand how the texts illuminate power relations within the Malay-language newsrooms, it is important to have greater understanding of what it meant to be a woman journalist working in these

[18] Examples of analysis of newspaper articles employing these tools include Robin Melrose, "Text Semantics and the Ideological Patterning of Texts," *Critical Discourse Studies* 2, no. 1 (2005), 71-94; Robert de Beaugrande, "Critical Discourse Analysis from the Perspective of Ecologism," *Critical Discourse Studies* 1 (2004), 113-45; Douglas Kellner, "9/11, Spectacles of Terror, and Media Manipulation," *Critical Discourse Studies* 1 (2004), 41-64.

[19] See also Voss and Speere, "More Than 'Rations, Passions, and Fashions'"; Mills, *A Place in the News*; Fiamengo, *The Woman's Page*; Jana Mikota, "Proletarian Literature and the Woman Question: The Journalism of Alice Ruhle-Gerstel (1894-1943)," ed. Christa Spreizer, *Documenting women's histories: German-speaking journalists (1900-1950)* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014), 205-23; Deborah Barton, "'Soft' Propaganda for Germany? The Writings of Ursula Von Kardorff (1911-1988)," ed. Christa Spreizer, *Discovering women's histories: German-speaking journalists (1900-1950)* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014), 309-35.

[20] Gakahu and Mukhongo, "'Women's Pages' in Kenya's Newspapers." It should be noted that women's magazines receive far more critical analysis. For Malaysian examples alone see Wang, "Ways of Seeing Malaysian Women."; Ismail, "In Pursuit of Mr. Right."; Kalaiyarasi Kathiraveloo, "Portrayal of Women in Women's Magazine Advertisements: Comparison between 'Her World' and 'Wanita'" (Universiti Putra Malaysia, 2001).

[21] Gakahu and Mukhongo, "'Women's Pages' in Kenya's Newspapers," 428.

environments. Oral histories can help shed light on how women understood their working environment, and the restrictions and freedoms which they operated under.

Oral histories

As noted above, analysis of articles alone is insufficient to give insights into how power relations manifest in the newsroom, to uncover whether and how women journalists occupied a marginal position within the state's power structures. Thus, I complement the analysis of content with oral histories. During the first three months of 2014, I interviewed 21 Malay-language women journalists about their time in the newspapers, having sought and received ethics approval. To contact the respondents, I began with a list of names that I had collected through the by-lines in the women's pages, the front page and the editorial pages, finding a total of around 60 names to follow up. I then contacted the Women's Journalists' Association and asked for their assistance; spoke with my external supervisor at the Universiti Teknologi Mara, which has a large and well-established journalism programme, and asked her to perform introductions; and contacted some women through public profiles posted online.[22] Each of these methods helped me contact some of the respondents, and some women were referred to me multiple times. I also asked respondents if they would help me contact their (former) colleagues. Some of the women whose names I had found had passed away, others could not be reached, and some (not unexpectedly) refused to see me. My list, however, was not exhaustive, and some of the women interviewed had not been on the list.

The aim was not to conduct identical, replicable interviews, but rather to work with the women to narrate their oral histories.[23] Thus, I explored the respondents' experiences in the newsroom, being able to contrast the working conditions of women whose worked primarily in the women's pages with those who worked primarily on the news or (political) features desk.

[22] Fabiola Baltar and Ignasi Brunet, "Social Research 2.0: Virtual Snowball Sampling Method Using Facebook," *Internet Research* 22, no. 1 (2012), 57-74.

[23] Drawing on discussions of collaboration and the limits to this, such as Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," ed. Luisa Del Giudice, *Oral history, oral culture, and Italian Americans* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 149-94; Daniel James, "'Listening in the Cold': The Practice of Oral History in an Argentine Working Class Community," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 73-91; Michael Frisch, "Oral History and *Hard Times*: A Review Essay," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 40-7; Kathleen Blee, "Evidence, Empathy and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 423-44.

Oral history encourages respondents to place the period in question into the wider context of their life histories, which can help to uncover moments of change and broader continuities that may be missed in an in-depth interview.[24] Thus, I was interested in finding out about the work history of respondents in their entirety, showing how they entered and, where applicable, left the newsroom, as well as the years they worked for the papers. This methodology drew attention to the generational change in processes of professionalisation, for example, that strictly attending to the period in question may have missed. One unexpected limitation, however, came from the "kissing cousins" relationship between oral history and journalism.[25] Journalists (as one respondent noted) are accustomed to conducting interviews, and have preconceived notions of what an interview should be.[26] Thus, there was occasionally an impatience with the search for long-form answers: after half an hour, one respondent asked whether I was done, the assumption apparently being that a competent interviewer would have the soundbite, and be satisfied.[27]

Little work of this nature has been done in Malaysia. Janet Steele's surveys of attitudes towards news values and ethics are the most significant, but she does not interview any female respondents.[28] Thus, a number of my respondents commented on how strange it was for them to be on the receiving end of interview questions, that a number of the topics, particularly about ethics and values, were not matters they had thought deeply about.[29] These responses highlight the importance of these stories – while, as journalists, they can be seen as being in a position of power, "having voice", the documenting of their own experiences had rarely taken place. Most respondents also recounted that they enjoyed the interviews, two using their interview as the basis for articles or blog posts.

In terms of transcription, I have inserted punctuation for ease of flow, but have minimised changes to sentence structure or grammar. I made the latter choice to reflect the nuances of Malaysian English. Rather than reading these as grammatical errors, they reflect the rich cultural heritage of Malaysians

[24] Mark Cave, "What Remains: Reflections on Crisis Oral History," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 92-103.
[25] Mark Feldstein, "Kissing Cousins: Journalism and Oral History," *The Oral History Review* 31, no. 1 (2004), 1-22.
[26] Damia (pseudonym) interviewed Bangsar, 26 January 2014.
[27] Non Einai, interviewed Kepong, 12 March 2014.
[28] Janet Steele, "Professionalism Online: How Malaysiakini Challenges Authoritarianism," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 14, no. 1 (2009), 91-111; "Justice and Journalism."
[29] Viktor Chagas, "Grassroots Journalists, Citizen Historians: The Interview as Journalistic Genre and History Methodology," *Oral History* 40, no. 2 (2012), 59-68; Nafise E. Motlagh, "Relationship between Malaysian Newspapers Journalists' Knowledge, Attitude and Law-Ethics Priority and Possible Ethical Behavior" (Universiti Putra Malaysia, 2013).

in that they often show not just Malay-language grammar patterns, but also Chinese- or Indian-language grammars that have seeped into common parlance even among those with little understanding of the languages.[30] Respondents were offered a choice between Malay or English as the language of the interview, and most switched between languages, reflected in the quotes. I believe the language is richer for these deviances from standard English or Malay.

My respondents

The 21 women interviewed included 10 from each paper, and one who had worked at both papers, with careers spanning from three to over thirty years.[31] At least 11 had been published in the women's pages. They spanned approximately three generations of journalists. The first (1969-1978) comprised those who joined prior to the New Economic Policy, who had secondary school qualifications and entered a newsroom dominated by men (four journalists, one university-educated on entry).[32] The second (1979-1986), those who were part of the "pioneer" batches of NEP graduates, when a university education was still comparatively rare in the population as a whole, and who entered the newsroom prior to the start of the period I am researching (eight journalists, one not university-educated on entry). Lastly, the NEP generation (1987-1997), for whom a university-level education was a given. They joined newsrooms and university courses with a strong female presence, even if the hierarchy was still predominantly male (nine journalists). While, of course, these classifications mask generational overlap and the complexity of individual experiences, they are useful markers for understanding how gender relations in the newsroom changed. These changes had an impact upon how journalists related to their job and to the newsroom.

The development of the journalists' relationships with the ruling party is harder to trace. While identification with the Umno remains strong across the generations, the first generation saw their job as part of a struggle for Malay independence in the face of the broad experience of colonialism, having been mentored by those directly involved in the Independence movement. They were unanimous in feeling that the standard of journalism had suffered as a result of moving away from that defining movement, which they saw as being related to the decreasing idealism of journalists. The second

[30] This decision follows reflection upon arguments made, in particular, in Linda Shopes, "Editing Oral History for Publication," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 470-89.
[31] See Appendix B for a short bibliography on each of the women interviewed.
[32] The NEP began in 1971, but there was a lag in the impact affecting access to tertiary education.

generation saw the Malay struggle as primarily an economic one, at least domestically. They saw the anti-colonial movement as still relevant in the field of foreign affairs, not domestically. The third saw the struggle in terms of the maintenance of *BN*/ Umno political hegemony, in particular against the in-roads made by the opposition subsequent to the period analysed here.[33] Again, these broad brush strokes hide differences, but are useful to bear in mind during the analysis that follows.

Temporally, the political context in which the interviews took place was very different from that of the time being researched (although it obviously informs this research), which would have had an impact upon responses. From 1998-2013, the fortunes of the Umno waned, and some respondents drew attention to the comparative freedom they had while Mahathir was in power from 1981 until 2003, which appeared to some as a golden age for journalism.[34] In the decade following Mahathir's resignation as Umno president, the party was humiliated in the General Elections twice, first in 2008 and subsequently in 2013, failing to achieve a two-thirds majority in either poll.[35] Given, as I discuss below, the close ties the respondents, generally, professed to the ruling coalition, these events coloured some of their responses, especially in relation to the influence exerted by Anwar Ibrahim in leading the Islamisation agenda into the 1990s.[36]

The political and social environment in Malaysia, particularly in regard to the respondents' personal relationship with religion and how this changed, could also have coloured responses. The first and second generation respondents spoke about a very different newsroom culture. These shifts in newsroom culture were mirrored by personal journeys of a renewal, rediscovery or reinterpretation of faith on the part of almost all these respondents. More than one respondent, for example, talked of going to nightclubs, wearing miniskirts and of smoking in her youth, which she explicitly contrasted to Islamic behaviour.[37] In contrast, at the time of the interviews, all but two (Rosnah Majid and

[33] This can be seen as related to the Others discussed in Chapter One, building on Hamayotsu, "Islam and Nation Building in Southeast Asia," 359-60.
[34] William Case, "Post-GE13: Any Closer to Ethnic Harmony and Democratic Change?," *The Round Table* 102, no. 6 (2013), 511-13; Meredith L. Weiss, "Edging toward a New Politics in Malaysia: Civil Society at the Gate?," *Asian Survey* 49, no. 5 (2009), 741-58; Farish A. Noor, "The Malaysian General Elections of 2013: The Last Attempt at Secular-Inclusive Nation-Building?," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 32, no. 2 (2013), 89-104.
[35] The 'two-thirds' mark was of psychological significance, with previous leaders up to and including Mahathir Mohamad saying that the country would be 'ungovernable' should BN seats in Parliament drop below this level. Proposed constitutional amendments require a two-thirds majority to pass.
[36] For a discussion of these events, see Joseph Chinyong Liow, Piety and Politics: Islamism in Contemporary Malaysia, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 115-17.
[37] E.g. Norila Daud interviewed 8 February 2014, *Utusan* office.

Jamhariah Jaafar) covered their heads, and a few drew attention to having given up smoking. Third generation respondents did not talk of a personal journey of transformation in the same way. While this reflects changing societal norms, all the respondents spoke of these as deeply personal journeys. None related it to societal pressure, but instead to internal reflection and search for knowledge.[38] Thus, the interviews, and the processes of Islamisation, need to be read with these journeys, perceived as highly individual, in mind.[39]

Another key event that coloured at least some of the interviews was the March 2014 disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 and the media debacle that was unfolding while some interviews were undertaken.[40] The disappearance was mentioned directly by five respondents (not always during the recorded interview). Malaysian journalists felt that the world was watching and that the verdict, on both Malaysia and the Malaysian media, was far from complimentary. While some interviewees, those no longer in the newsroom, used this as a way of bolstering their own credentials, there was a common thread of indignant nationalism. Thus, the interviews after the disappearance were marginally more nationalistic than those prior – but the thread of identification with the ruling party, and in particular with Mahathir was strong throughout (see below).[41] The identification with Mahathir was defined not only against the opposition political parties, but also against other personalities within the Umno.

Some respondents commented on the length of time that had passed since, for example, they had joined the newsroom and done formal training. Timing may also have coloured some of the recollections in other ways.[42] The clearest example of this was one respondent who had recently been demoted, following an error (with potential political consequences) in a story she had edited.[43] Her

[38] E.g. Sa'adah Ismail interviewed 14 March 2014, Bangsar Shopping Centre. Her response contrasts with the respondents in Anwar, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia*, 46-84.
[39] I return to this point in Chapter Three, but establish it here as important context for the oral histories to follow.
[40] See Stephen McDonnell, "It's About the Media, Not the Plane," *The Drum* (2014).
[41] At the time of the interviews, Mahathir supported Umno.
[42] For discussions on memory and oral history, how time can both reinforce and alter memories, see, e.g. Fred Allison, "Remembering a Vietnam War Firefight: Changing Perspectives over Time," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 334-42; Orlando Figes, "Private Life in Stalin's Russia: Narratives, Memory and Oral History," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 354-69; Douglas Ezzy, "Theorizing Narrative Identity: Symbolic Interactionism and Hermeneutics," *The Sociological Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (1998), 239-52; Brinkley Messick, "Evidence: From Memory to Archive," *Islamic Law & Society* 9, no. 2 (2002), 231-70; Paul Ricouer, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006).
[43] Salbiah Ani interviewed 2 February 2014, *BH* office.

responses were frank and often harsh. They may have been more revealing than if she had been interviewed before her demotion. Particularly in terms of the experiences during training, however, there is significant correlation between responses generationally, that is the experiences of those in the first generation tend to be similar and likewise for subsequent generations.

Prior to the interviews, I explained my research to the respondents and why I am interested in the voices of Malay women journalists, as outlined in both the Plain Language Statement and the consent form (see Appendix A). Those who were recommended by previous respondents generally discussed the interviews with each other, and at one interview the prior respondent came along, leading to a dynamic session with the two respondents prompting memories and asking each other questions as well. Thus, respondents were well informed about what was going to be asked before the interview session. Only one expressed reservations about how the material would be used, but was happy to proceed after I discussed my thesis in greater detail, and explained that I would send her a copy of the transcript. All respondents were offered a copy of the transcript for verification, and only two made minor changes.

One obstacle faced was the unwillingness of women to discuss their achievements. Kathleen M. Ryan says female respondents often downplayed their role by saying that they didn't do anything important, in terms of their Naval and Coastguard service during the Second World War, yet through the act of telling their stories, they asserted and claimed their role in events perceived as being historically important.[44] Similar downplaying of their own importance manifested with my respondents attempting to pass me onto others with "more" experience – generally those who were more senior rather than those who had worked on the papers for longer.[45] Often, despite knowing that my focus is on female journalists, they asked me to contact male colleagues. Given that male voices dominate the literature and that I had limited time available to conduct my interviews, I chose to only speak to female respondents. Two of the most senior journalists also demurred from providing me with contact details for reporters that they thought were inappropriate. "She's not very bright"

[44] Kathleen M. Ryan "'I Didn't Do Anything Important': A Pragmatist Analysis of the Oral History Interview." *The Oral History Review* 36, no. 1 (2009), 25-44.

[45] I use the word "respondent" to reflect the nature of the research and my relationship with those interviewed. When designing the research questionnaire, and particularly during the analysis stage, I was conscious that I am constructing these women as being in collusion with an authoritarian state, analysis that they would strongly disagree with – that is with my characterisation of the state as authoritarian. For a discussion on relationships with respondents, see Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," 175-80; James Bennett, "Human Values in Oral History," *The Oral History Review* 11 (1983), 1-15; James, "'Listening in the Cold'."

said one, when I mentioned a colleague by name. This hesitancy was particularly true of the women working primarily in the women's pages. The women's pages were seen, even by those who worked there, as a poor alternative to “real” news, as documented in the following chapter. This caution reflects both cultural and gendered norms. The respondents often conducted their narratives in ways that conformed to society's expectations. Similar phrases were used by many of the respondents, along with the use of self-deprecating laughter. So, for example, one respondent repeatedly used the phrase “I don't know for what reason” when discussing a promotion or when other people praised her work.[46] While such modesty could be read in the context of spiritual journeys discussed below, it was presented more as a cultural manoeuvre to allow the women freedom to talk about their work: It was not that the journalist omitted details of her awards or promotions, but she took care to only refer to them conditionally, downplaying her achievements.[47] The respondent could only give herself permission to talk about her achievements if she qualified them beforehand.

My relation to the journalists and their work is complex. One of the facets I bring to this research is my experience and current engagement as a Malaysian media freedom advocate, as well as previous experience as a journalist. Thus, in reflecting on my “insider/ outsider” status, there are both advantages and disadvantages of either status, and there is complexity in categorising oneself as either an insider or outsider.[48] The literature shows that insiders benefit from openness and candour, but suffer due to the assumption of shared knowledge, and concerns about status within the insider group or society.[49] In contrast, respondents may not be as willing to share information with an “outsider”, especially if that information casts the “insider” group in a poor light. During the interviews, unconsciously but actively, I attempted to portray myself as an “insider.” I emphasised my experience working as a journalist in Malaysia, when given the opportunity to do so. Several respondents were aware of my activism (having attended workshops together, for instance), and I mentioned it to some who did not know: I was not hiding my activism, but did not draw attention to it in the same way that I drew attention to my past as a journalist. Yet, my research is motivated by my activism – I want to investigate mechanisms by which change occurs so that activists, including myself, can make better use of those mechanisms (recognising that I have little control over this). My

[46] Fariza Saidin interviewed 28 February 2014, Kuala Lumpur.
[47] While self-effacing behaviour such as this is part of Malay culture, it is particularly pronounced in women.
[48] Susan K. Burton, "Issues in Cross-Cultural Interviewing: Japanese Women in England," *Oral History* 31, no. 1 (2003), 38-46.
[49] Liu Jieyu, "Researching Chinese Women's Lives: 'Insider' Research and Life History Interviewing," *Oral History* 34 (2006), 43-52; Fiona Cosson, "Voice of the Community? Reflections on Accessing, Working with and Representing Communities," *Oral History* 38, no. 2 (2010), 95-101.

aim is unlikely to be supported by my respondents, who as Malay-language journalists have been part of the power structure, to varying extents. Despite this, my research is, at least in part, about "giving voice" to women whose voices are usually only heard when mediating the voices of others.

As a result of these tensions, I have paid close attention, in my analysis, to the ways in which respondents position themselves, both in terms of their relationship to the newspaper and the papers' position vis-à-vis other media. It is possible that respondents downplayed experiences of discrimination, for example. I have, therefore, placed reliance on the anecdotes and stories told by respondents and avoided questions that might lead to simple yes or no answers (such as "did you experience discrimination").

The questions

I started with around 20 questions to initiate conversation, but used follow-up questions to elicit further information. I refined the questions as I went along, discarding those that rarely produced anything beyond a one-word answer, or that produced confusion (for example, a question on development journalism), thus have not included a list of questions in the appendix. While some were willing, even eager, to discuss discrimination, others were equally eager to disavow its existence. In response to one respondent's concern to show that differences are individual rather than dictated by gender, I amended questions to offer the possibility that gender played no role in shaping news values or in terms of the obstacles journalists face (the two questions that specifically referred to a male-female divide). This iterative process, refining questions and working with respondents, is well-established, encapsulated by oral history pioneer Studs Terkel: "It's like jazz, you've got to improvise."[50]

The interviews lasted between 30 and 100 minutes, with over 17 hours of material recorded. As I conducted the interviews, I made notes in a notebook, which I reviewed each evening after the interviews, and again as I wrote up this and the following chapter. I also referred to my notes when details in the audio content were unclear.

[50] Tony Parker and Studs Terkel, "Studs Terkel with Tony Parker: Interviewing with an Interviewer," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 152.

The questions put to respondents fall into four rough categories of gender relations in the newsroom; ethics; training; values; and Islam. In examining the role of the women's pages of the newspapers in an authoritarian society, I explored the extent and limits of women's ability to make editorial decisions within the newsroom. Women's presence has been extensively analysed in other contexts (particularly the United States) through media monitoring, through the (lack of) difference in decision-making processes and outcomes in male-headed and female-headed newsrooms and interviews with or surveys of journalists.[51]

The first reason behind these questions was to examine the influence of the male hierarchy in the newsroom, where it exerts influence, and to test the extent of Umno's influence within the newsroom, as perceived by the journalists. As noted earlier in this chapter, examining the dynamics of how women's pages and the women's editorial desk relate to other parts of the newspaper is a rich vein of research that has been underexplored, particularly since the demise of the women's pages in most Western newspapers. I was also interested in women's experiences of censorship, which has been explored in related contexts in Malaysia. Shakila Manan, for example, explored censorship in relation to the English-language newspaper, the *New Straits Times,* and the coverage of the *Reformasi*.[52] She, however, looks at coverage of a particular period of political upheaval, and at one English-language newspaper.[53] Further, she analyses content rather than the experiences of the journalists themselves. She thus contrasts different parts of the same paper as an end product. My research complements and contrasts with her article, by examining the struggles that journalists had in defending their stories; revealing stories which did not make publication; and looking at repercussions faced by journalists subsequent to publication. As the interviews below show, these are all important in tracing the paths of power and censorship.

I also asked questions on ethics to uncover the extent of formal processes of professionalisation for journalists, what these processes involved and how far they involved the establishment of a distinctively Malaysian form of journalism. The processes of professionalisation and the role of codes

[51] Ross and Carter, "Women and News: A Long and Winding Road"; Beam and Di Cicco, "When Women Run the Newsroom"; Kim Kyung-Hee, "Obstacles to the Success of Female Journalists in Korea," *Media, Culture & Society* 28, no. 1 (2006), 123-41; Craft and Wanta, "Women in the Newsroom."
[52] Shakila Manan, "Re-Reading the Media: A Stylistic Analysis of Malaysian Media Coverage of Anwar and the Reformasi Movement," *Asia Pacific Media Educator* 11, no. 4 (2001), 39-54.
[53] Manan, "Re-Reading the Media", 48.

of ethics have been analysed in terms of their influence on university curricula; and the impact of codes of ethics has also been quantitatively analysed, as introduced in Chapter One.[54] From a theoretical viewpoint, Hamid Mowlana has reflected on the implications of specific Islamic values for journalism as boundary markers to freedom of expression, such as the Islamic injunction "commanding the right and prohibiting from the wrong".[55] My research makes a new contribution to the literature by looking specifically at Malay-language, rather than English-language, print media, where, in the context of Malay-dominated politics, authoritarian regulations were more keenly experienced, and focusing on women journalists. As has been explored in Chapter One, the process of professionalisation privileges a male style of reporting. There are two aspects to the process of professionalisation, the formal training given at a tertiary level, and the informal training that has been traditionally important in newsrooms in Malaysia and globally.[56] Meryl Aldridge and Julia Evetts argue that journalism demonstrates professionalism's "power as a form of self-discipline."[57] It is this latter issue of self-discipline and control at a distance that has been taken up by feminist media studies. The aim of the questions on ethics and training was to provide insight into how far journalists' lived experiences were tempered by processes of professionalisation. For my thesis to have merit, women journalists must be able to reflect their lived experiences, including their responses to neoliberalism and Islamisation, at least in the women's pages of the newspapers.

I analysed the values that the respondents thought important for the practice of journalism, and which they saw as contributing to making or being a **good** journalist. In the literature, this ranges from David Randall's "universal journalist" who follows prescribed norms that show no variation according to context;[58] to the more nuanced analysis of Murray Masterton, reflecting both the universality of journalists' aspirations or language, but also the impact of culture and context on their practice;[59] to

[54] Mustafa K. Anuar, "Teaching 'Best Practices' of Journalism in Malaysia," *Asia Pacific Media Educator* 20, no. 16 (2010), 177-82; Ahmad Murad Merican, "Orientalism in Reporting Religion: Approaches to Teaching Journalism and Islam as a Civilization," *Asia Pacific Media Educator* 20, no. 16 (2010), 163-76; Motlagh et al., "Role of Journalists' Gender, Work Experience and Education"; Motlagh, "Relationship between Malaysian Journalists' Knowledge and Possible Ethical Behavior"; Mrinal Pande, "Asian Values in Journalism," in *AMIC Seminar on Asian Values in Journalism Seminar Nilai-Nilai Kewartawanan Asia* (Kuala Lumpur: Asian Media Information and Communication Centre, 1995), 8-10.
[55] Hamid Mowlana, "Foundation of Communication in Islamic Societies," in *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and Culture*, ed. Sophia Marriage and Jolyon Mitchell (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 305-15.
[56] Nafise E. Motlagh et al., "Role of Education and Work Experience in Journalists' Perception About Journalism Codes of Ethics," *International Journal of Asian Social Science* 3, no. 8 (2013), 1822-3.
[57] Aldridge and Evetts, "Rethinking Professionalism," 5.
[58] Randall, *The Universal Journalist*.
[59] Murray Masterton, "Asian Journalists Seek Values Worth Preserving," *Asia Pacific Media Educator* 16, no. 6 (2005), 41-8.

the uncritical acceptance of Asian values as determining Asian news.[60] Thus, I am interested in respondents' perceptions of what makes them a good journalist, what values they think important for journalists to cultivate. I also wanted to see how these values correlated with those examined by Steele's exploration of Islamic values in the newsroom of online publications in Malaysia (and print publications in Indonesia) and/ or the values outlined by Mowlana, thus these questions were also linked with those below that explicitly explored the influence of Islam and Islamisation in the newsroom.[61]

Questions about Islam were primarily aimed at uncovering changes, or perceived changes, that the respondents observed in the newsroom. My thesis examines why such changes were perceived to have taken place, if they had, and whether this was at the directive of the Government or management hierarchy or as a response to perceived changes in the readership, for example. Given that the newspapers were seen as an extension of the civil service – to the extent that one journalist recalled having been trained at Intan, an institute specifically for the training of civil servants – I wanted to explore whether changes in the newsroom could have been seen as an extension of Mahathir's Islamic Values Policy (which was not mentioned even once by respondents), whether they tied it to the influence of former Abim leader Anwar Ibrahim, or whether it was due to other factors.[62] I was also interested in whether the newspapers were seen as providing a conduit for the spread of influence from elites to the masses or vice-versa, in the manner of the media in Singapore.[63]

I also included questions on the influence of family and friends on the journalist and their stories to understand further how far the external social environment was perceived, by the respondents, to influence their stories and story arcs; and the changing nature of the newsroom which impacted upon gender relations. To elicit information on all the above subjects, I asked respondents questions about particular stories that they worked on, to discover in concrete terms the process by which a story was

[60] Kalinga Seneviratne, "Reporting Asia the Asian 'Way' - Issues and Constraints," *Asia Pacific Media Educator* 9, no. 13 (2000), 170-80.
[61] Steele, "Justice and Journalism"; Mowlana, "Foundation of Communication in Islamic Societies."
[62] Normala Hamzah interviewed 8 April 2014,Bangi; Mohamed Aslam Haneef, "The Development and Impact of Islamic Ecnomic Institutions: The Malaysian Experience," in *Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social and Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century*, ed. K.S. Nathan and Mohammad Hashim Kamali (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), 86.
[63] Hill and Lian, *The Politics of Nation Building and Citizenship in Singapore*, 12-38; Cherian George, *Freedom from the Press: Journalism and State Power in Singapore* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012), 8-10.

constructed, the influences that came to bear upon a story and how the values and ethics they had enunciated impacted upon the stories themselves.

This approach significantly differs from the approaches taken by other surveys of journalists, particularly women journalists in Malaysia. Tiung Lee Kuok et al's survey of 12 women journalists in Sabah shows that many of the factors enunciated by the respondents below were shared by the women journalists interviewed in East Malaysia.[64] The denial of discrimination is common to both, for example, exemplified by the comment by informant 'J8' that "there are only hardworking journalists or lazy journalists, not male or female (ones)."[65] This conclusion is the same as that reached by the article's authors. The sources, however, note several forms of institutionalised discrimination, such as the working hours; assuming that women are more emotional; and social disapprobation of women who work late. This tension between the conditions women face, and their denial of discrimination, is further illustrated and discussed in the next chapter.[66]

Conclusion

This chapter establishes the methodology used in the next three chapters. Combining oral histories and textual analysis and looking at both of these critically, to uncover power relations and how these contributed to the construction of the Malay-Muslim woman in the papers, I next examine the position women occupied in the newsrooms and how far women journalists could act autonomously within the power structures of the newsroom. The argument I make in the next chapter is that the media is not monolithic, that is uniformly echoing a unified Government voice; I also begin looking at how newsroom fractures impacted upon women journalists across the paper and the implications for their stories, and their relationship with the ruling coalition. Thus, I show how party political influence in the women's pages was significantly less than that in the leader pages, how the differentials of party influence allowed women page journalists more editorial freedom and how that allowed them to depict women in ways that did not conform to the Umno development model.

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[64] Tiung et al., "Women in Journalism World."
[65] "*hanya wujud wartawan yang rajin atau wartawan yang malas, bukan lelaki atau wanita"*, Tiung et al., "Women in Journalism World", 23.
[66] This is not, of course, a condition limited to journalism. See also Rosemary Hunter, "Talking up Equality: Women Barristers and the Denial of Discrimination," *Feminist Legal Studies* 10, no. 2 (2002), 113-30; Faye Crosby, "The Denial of Personal Discrimination," *American Behavioral Scientist* 27, no. 3 (1984), 371-86.

Chapter Three: Women in the newsrooms: Their perceptions and stories

> If you write politics, that is another thing, other stories are okay. When it comes to politics, this is *BN*, so you have to obey. Women('s page) is okay.
>
> - Seri Intan Othman (*Berita Harian*, 1983-)[1]

Journalists are subject to power from numerous sources, and exercise power in multiple ways.[2] Within the newsrooms, journalists and desks compete for resources and prestige. I argue that in this contest, women's page journalists were disadvantaged. Yet, as the opening quote indicates there were advantages to being at the margins of the newspaper. Women journalists who were seen as unreliable in terms of following the agenda set by politically appointed, or at least beholden, editors were relegated to the women's pages, where they transgressed the unspoken boundaries of malestream news.[3] In this chapter I explore the oral histories of 21 women journalists, to uncover their newsroom experiences. My analysis here provides new insights into the gendered culture of Malay-language newsrooms between 1987 and 1998. I argue that the women's pages were seen as outside the purview of party politics by both journalists and editors, with the result that women page journalists had more freedom than malestream journalists.

This chapter is thus primarily concerned with the ability of journalists to influence stories and story arcs in the newsroom, connected both with their position within the newsroom hierarchy, their status within the newsroom and their relations with that hierarchy. I ask first, how women journalists were positioned within the newsroom, and how their experience was different from that of male colleagues; then how women in the malestream sections of the paper viewed their work differently from those in other sections of the paper, particularly the women's pages; and how these relations impacted the women's ability to choose their stories and story arcs, alongside the influence of formal censorship and less formal professionalisation processes. I argue that women in the margins, and in particular the women's pages, have some freedom to depart from the Umno mold of the Malay-Muslim woman,

[1] Interviewed, Bangsar, 30 January 2014.
[2] This has been examined at a macroscopic level in Arsenault and Castells, "Switching Power."
[3] Such impunity was also seen in the women's pages of US newsrooms, see, e.g. Mills, *A Place in the News*, 116.

although this freedom has clear constraints.

Women journalists in male papers

In 2008, third-generation journalist Marhaini Kamaruddin (1992-present) became the first female news editor at *Utusan*.[4] She said, "they as if… *mesti* [must] limit to one [news editor]. If we put women more than guys, *tak boleh* [cannot]!" Thus, more than one woman in authority was seen negatively, privileging an "other".[5] As noted in newsrooms in other contexts, men were the norm, ungendered.[6]

The better a woman was at conforming to the norms of femininity, the less recognition she was given as a journalist.[7] Marhaini said she had not experienced discrimination, because she did not conform to the stereotypical Malay woman:

> It's different for me, because I'm outgoing, very outspoken personality, but there are some reporters, wearing *tudung lebar sikit daripada* [a headscarf more glamorous than] I, or maybe dress *baju kurung sahaja* [just in traditional wear], maybe *yang lembut* [softer], but you look at their work, they can perform.

Thus, style of dress and self-presentation impacted how a woman was treated professionally. Second generation *Utusan* journalist Melati Arieff (1979-1991) reinforced this point: "To be a journalist, people say you have to be very outgoing, you have to be talkative, I was the opposite, I am very introvert, I was not sociable."[8] Editors undervalued her contributions, although Melati said it did not affect her career, perhaps reflecting the reluctance of women to identify discrimination as such (explored later). The importance of transgressing gender performativity was echoed by third generation *BH* journalist Nurul Adlina Kamaludin (1993-2008), who put her successful career down to being from the capital, saying her rural friends wondered "why is she so outspoken", and that this helped her in her career.[9] In the US, Linda Steiner also notes that women journalists often see themselves as not conforming to stereotype, and locates their desire not to be contained to the women's pages in their difference from other women.[10]

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[4] Marhaini Kamaruddin, interviewed *Utusan* office, 1 April 2014.
[5]Kimmel, *The Gendered Society*, 6-7; Michael Peletz, "Neither Reasonable nor Responsible: Contrasting Representations of Masculinity in a Malay Society," *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 2 (1994): 136-8.
[6] Lumsden, "'You're a Tough Guy, Mary'"; Tim P. Vos and Teri Finneman, "The Early Historical Construction of Journalism's Gatekeeping Role," *Journalism* 18, no. 3 (2016), 276; Monika Djerf-Pierre, "The Difference Engine," *Feminist Media Studies* 11, no. 1 (2011), 43-51.
[7] Louise North, "'Just a Little Bit of Cheeky Ribaldry'?," *Feminist Media Studies* 7, no.1 (2007), 81-96; Kim, "Obstacles to the Success of Female Journalists in Korea."
[8] Melati Arieff nterviewed Kuala Lumpur, 31 March 2014.
[9] Nurul Adlina Kamaludin interviewed Pusat Bandar Damansara, 17 March 2014.
[10] Linda Steiner, "Failed Theories: Explaining Gender Difference in Journalism," (Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2012), 205.

Lack of gender competence was not always a career advantage. Second generation senior *BH* journalist Salbiah Ani (1984 - present) said her slow advancement, further discussed below, was in part because she did not conform to gender roles, that "The male can be vocal, but the lady cannot be vocal."[11] She contradicts the above views: Salbiah said outspoken women were less likely to be promoted. This difference could reflect the different career paths pursued – Salbiah's career focus was literature, outside the "malestream" sections of the paper and a more conventional career path for women journalists.[12] Another factor could be their relationship to the Umno. Marhaini clearly identified with the ruling coalition ("we're the government's voice"), while Salbiah identified herself as being independent, willing to stand up for the rights of others vis-à-vis the ruling coalition. This willingness to identify as independent was almost a defining feature of the journalists outside the malestream sections. As I examine in the following chapters and below, the relationship of journalists to the political party was instrumental to forging a malestream career, with implications for story construction in various parts of the newspapers (see Chapters Four and Five).

The conclusion from this sample of responses is that "poor" gender performance was rewarded if it was in service of the Umno. The history of *Wanita* Umno and its precursor the *Kaum Ibu* (Mothers' Group, *KI*) reflects a similar dynamic, as seen by the expulsion of Khadijah Sidek in 1956.[13] From her election as national leader of the *KI* in 1954, she advocated for five of the 35 seats that were to be contested in the 1955 Legislative Council elections to be reserved for women, earning the ire of her male counterparts.[14] This advocacy for women resulted in the first attempt to expel her from the party. Her continued advocacy for women's rights within the party resulted in her successful expulsion just two years later.[15] Both her immediate successor Fatimah Hashim (1956-1972) and the *Wanita* Umno chief for most of this period, Rafidah Aziz (1984-1996; 1999-2008), were "outspoken" in defence of women's development and of Umno, but rarely intervened in asserting equality within the party.[16]

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[11] Salbiah Ani, interviewed *BH* office, 2 February 2014.

[12] Moving women into alternative career paths has been studied in contexts as wide-ranging as early Latin American writers to those of post-Suharto Indonesia. See, e.g.,Méndez, ""Só Para Mulheres" (Just for Women)"; Nilan and Utari, "Meanings of Work for Female Media and Communications Workers". See also Leon De Kock, "Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa," *ARIEL*, no. 3 (1992), 34.

[13]Khadijah was a member of the council, but not present on the occasion of her expulsion.

[14] Her biography shows that she repeatedly contradicted male leadership on issues pertaining to women. For example, she insisted on having a female information officer to address crowds, to help draw more women into Umno, despite male opposition. Khadijah Sidek, *Memoir Khadijah Sidek Puteri Kesateria Bangsa (Memoir of Khadijah Sidek, National Warrior Princess)* (Bangi: Penerbit UKM, 1995), 133.

[15] For a summary of her career, see Helen Ting, "Khadijah Sidek and Tan Sri Fatimah Hashim: Two Contrasting Models of (Malay) Feminist Struggle?," in *Fourth International Malaysian Studies Conference* (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi 2004), 4-6.

[16] Rafidah's biographer notes that she never aspired to become Prime Minister and "Those who expected Rafidah… to trumpet women's rights, equal rights, proportional representation *et cetera* were in for disappointment." Mei Zhou, *Rafidah Aziz Sans Malice* (Singapore: Yuyue Enterprise, 1997), 72-122.

The importance of gender performance remained unchanged across generations, but how gender was performed changed over time. Second generation *Utusan* journalist Norila Daud (1980-present) said: "Just imagine, I used to smoke openly, and so many of us smoked and nobody cared… women journalists (now), they don't smoke openly, they hide in the toilet and think nobody knows they are a smoker."[17] She later noted that these changes were a result of Islamization, "I think the Islamic consciousness is very much thicker now than it was before… we were free at that time, but now it has really changed." She also talked about going to discos and wearing mini-skirts (during the 1980s), while at the time of the interviews most respondents wore headscarves. Thus, how women were expected to behave as journalists changed over time in ways that were gendered, and responsive to wider processes of Islamisation.

The women, importantly, framed these changes primarily as personal journeys of faith. While Norila mentions freedom in the quote above, the attitude of second generation *Utusan* journalist Sa'adah Ismail (1979-1989), on donning a headscarf, is more representative of the respondents: "my friends from my journalism days (when they) saw me… they ask, what happened to you? I said, I saw the light."[18] Her journey of faith was presented as personal, and not the result of social or political changes. These changes fed into the shift from the Umno development-centred woman to a pious woman; and, as explored later, some of these changes in how gender was performed helped to inculcate a more women-friendly workplace in the newsrooms.

Sa'adah also noted that the actions of female journalists were seen as being actions of women in general, rather than of those particular women: "At one time, four reporters got pregnant at the same time, the editor said there will be no female reporters".[19] Editors saw reporters as female first, and reporters second. Linda Lumsden has examined a similar contradiction facing newspaperwomen in the US in the 1920s and 1930s, summed up in the quote that gives her article its title, "You're a tough guy, Mary", said by a male editor to comfort reporter Mary Knight as she left her journalism career, showing that a good journalist, even if female, was an (honorary) man, not a woman.[20] A 1985 study from the Netherlands said "many female journalists feel that they are judged primarily as women… Playing this game implies losing a great deal of prestige as professional journalists"; a 1990 study of Senegalese

[17] Norila Daud interviewed *Utusan* office, 8 February 2014.
[18] Sa'adah Ismail interviewed Bangsar, 14 March 2014.
[19] Sa'adah, interview.
[20] Lumsden, "'You're a Tough Guy, Mary'." See also Louise North, "Still a 'Blokes Club': The Motherhood Dilemma in Journalism," *Journalism* 17, no.3 (2014), 315-30.

women journalists said they were "accused of having lost their femininity".[21] Regardless of how gender was performed, therefore, women journalists were primarily women, who happened to work as journalists, compared to their male colleagues who were seen as ungendered. As gendered beings, they faced discrimination in both promotions and pay, as explored next.

The glass ceiling, promotions and pay

The term "glass ceiling" refers here to the absence of women in the highest positions of authority, particularly editor-in-chief. It is an invisible barrier, hard to challenge because it is built into behaviours and prejudices that are taken for granted. Communications scholar Gertrude Robinson notes that the glass ceiling includes (italics in original):

> barriers to advancement at *every level* of the hierarchy, not only at the top and that there may also be differential *speeds* with which females and males are promoted, as well as differential monetary *benefits* associated with promotion for the two genders.[22]

The lack of women in decision-making positions has been noted internationally. In a two-year study published in 2011, covering 59 nations, eminent media scholar Caroline Byerly found gendered glass ceilings existed in 20 countries, and overall women made up only 26% of governing positions and 27% of top management, figures that fell to around 13% in Asia.[23] While Malaysia was not included in the study, the following responses and analysis shed light on the pervasiveness of the glass ceiling in Malaysia.

Third generation *BH* journalist Maizura Mohd Ederis (1993-1996) said in the women's section they covered a lot of stories about the glass ceiling, jokingly adding "sometimes these issues were related to our daily life."[24] When probed further, she said:

> only one woman editor - can you imagine? - and assistant news editor, only one. And *NST* [the English-language sister paper to *BH*, the *New Straits Times*] also only one. I think that *Balai Berita* [News Booth, colloquial name for the headquarters], at that time, was a male-dominant society.[25]

She also said women were more likely to work in features, to balance family needs, but were not always

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[21] Mirjam Elias Diekerhof, Hanneke Acker, and Marjam Sax, *Voor Sover Plaats Ann De Perstafel* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff Educatief, 1985); R. van der Wijngaard, "Le Fait D'etre Femme, Detre Journaliste, C'est Pas Evident" (University of Amsterdam, 1990). Translated by and cited in van Zoonen, *Feminist Media Studies*, 54.
[22] Robinson, "The 'Glass Ceiling'," 96.
[23] Carolyn M Byerly, "Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media," (Washington: International Women's Media Foundation, 2011), 9.
[24] Maizura Mohd Ederis interviewed Taman Melawati, 13 January 2014. Maizura frequently used humour, apparently to cover discomfort at speaking against dominant structures, see also John C. Meyer, "Humor as a Double-Edged Sword: Four Functions of Humor in Communication," *Communication Theory* 10, no. 3 (2000), 312.
[25] Maizura, interview.

given a choice: Significantly, Maizura was single when working in the women's pages. Editors assumed that *because* they were women, they should be in features or other softer areas, rather than in news or crime.[26] Thus, women were pushed into career paths that did not extend to the highest positions.[27]

While, as shown above, discrimination was pervasive, women were uncomfortable with acknowledging or recognising discrimination. This finding confirms those of other scholars on this topic.[28] This reluctance to interpret their experiences of being held back in terms of gender discrimination is partially explained by their positions within the hierarchy: Successful women were less likely to see discrimination happening to other women or to themselves, given their own upward trajectories. The clearest example of this was first generation *Utusan* journalist Rosnah Majid (1977-1997). She said, "One thing is I'm not married. I can devote myself. Sorry to say to my colleagues who are getting married, having children... they cannot be as active as I."[29] Yet, she did not identify this as discrimination, but as a consequence of women having children. Other women posited that women work harder than men, but claimed that there was no discrimination – begging the question of why women were under-represented in senior management, or why they had to work harder to be considered for promotion.[30] Women who identified with the newspaper hierarchy continued this identification rather than bearing witness to gender discrimination.

Rosnah, who denied there was gender discrimination, still illustrated how politics affected women's careers, in a manner not reflected in the literature:

> Anwar [Ibrahim, then Minster of Finance] quickly put his man in *Utusan* [in 1992], by the name of Johan Jaafar. And Johan and me were contemporaries at university. And Johan never worked even a day with the daily newspaper. He just handled the monthly magazine, news magazine.[31]

In Malaysia, the post of editor-in-chief was a political post at least as much as an editorial one, and the appointees reflected currents and trends within the ruling party. In 1992, Anwar was clearly aiming for

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[26] For US examples, see Linda Steiner, "Newsroom Accounts of Gender at Work," in *News, Gender and Power*, ed. Cynthia Carter, Gill Branston, and Stuart Allan (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 152.
[27] This is not unique to Malaysia, e.g. Jana Mikota, "Journalistic Production of the New Woman"; Kimberly Wilmot Voss and Lance Speere, "Fashion as Washington Journalism History: Eleni Epstein and Her Three Decades at the *Washington Star*," *Media History Monographs* 16, no. 3 (2013), 1; Joseph, "The Media and Gender in the Age of Globalisation," 25.
[28] See, eg, Hunter, "Talking up Equality"; Jon E. Fox, Laura Moroşanu, and Eszter Szilassy, "Denying Discrimination: Status, 'Race', and the Whitening of Britain's New Europeans," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 41, no. 5 (2015), 729-48.
[29] Rosnah Majid interviewed Kuala Lumpur, 18 February 2014.
[30] Similarly journalists responded there are only two types of journalist, those who work hard and those who are lazy, in Tiung et al., "Women in Journalism World," 23.
[31] Rosnah, interview.

the Deputy Premiership of Umno, hoping to unseat the incumbent Ghafar Baba.[32] Johan (1992-1998), at the time a staunch Anwar ally, owed his position primarily to this political connection. This was mentioned by other respondents, first generation *Utusan* journalists Zaharani Asran (1973-2004) and Maimunah Yusof (1968-2000); and second generation *Utusan* journalist Fariza Saidin (1979-2007).[33]

Use of these connections by politicians was an exclusively male privilege. Female Umno politicians, such as Minister for International Trade and Industry (1987-2008) Rafidah Aziz, had to build a support base within *Wanita* Umno, rather than the (male) General Assembly: Her biographer noted that "her 'boss' is the Prime Minister", significantly not her constituents whether *Wanita* Umno or the voters.[34] Thus, Rafidah was appointed into the *Wanita* Umno executive committee (1972), the Senate and the Umno Supreme Council (both 1974) before she first stood for election (1978) or became president of *Wanita* Umno (1984).[35] This structure within Umno ensured women were reliant upon their male colleagues for Cabinet posts and the ability to distribute patronage benefits.[36] As I have argued in the Introduction, Umno men were not able to disregard *Wanita* Umno, but votes within *Wanita* Umno did not translate to votes in the General Assembly. Thus, in the National Policy on Women 1989, women's political role is summarised "They are a strong group of voters, and play a role in attracting votes."[37] Women were relevant to winning external elections, but not to the internal politics of Umno.[38] This bleed of party politics into the newsroom can be seen as being analogous to an "old boy" network - the membership of Umno (as opposed to *Wanita* Umno) is male, and it is access to the structures of power and patronage within Umno that opens up political opportunities to men such as Johan Jaafar.[39] Political patronage structures such as these were unique to the Malaysian context, and excluded women from the highest position in the paper. While the glass ceiling in the media has been

[32] The ongoing politicisation of appointments has been criticised in a speech by Lim Kit Siang, former Leader of the Opposition (1973-4; 1975-99; 2004-8), archived at http://www.limkitsiang.com/archive/2003/nov03/lks2756.htm.
[33] Zaharani Asran interviewed Kuala Lumpur, 27 February; Maimunah Yusof interviewed Ampang, 23 April; and Fariza Saidin interviewed Kuala Lumpur, 28 February 2014.
[34] Zhou, *Rafidah Aziz Sans Malice*, 125. The reliance of women on men in Umno is discussed, e.g., in Lai Suat Yan, "The Women's Movement in Peninsular Malaysia, 1900-1999: A Historical Analysis," in *Social Movements in Malaysia*, ed. Meredith L. Weiss and Saliha Hassan (Abingdon; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 45-74; Lenore Manderson, "The Shaping of the Kaum Ibu (Women's Section) of the United Malays National Organization," *Signs* 3, no. 1 (1977), 210-28.
[35] See Zhou, *Rafidah Aziz Sans Malice*, 62-71.
[36] For more on patronage politics see Crouch, "Authoritarian Trends, the Umno Split and the Limits to State Power," 27; Donald R Fraser, Hao Zhang, and Chek Derashid, "Capital Structure and Political Patronage: The Case of Malaysia," *Journal of Banking & Finance* 30, no. 4 (2006), 1291-1308.
[37] *Mereka merupakan kumpulan pengundi yang kuat dan sering memainkan peranan sebagai penarik pengundi*."Dasar Wanita Negara (National Policy on Women)," ed. Prime Minister's Office (Putrajaya 1989).
[38] See Virginia Helen Dancz, "Women's Auxiliaries and Party Politics in Western Malaysia" (University of Brandeis, 1981), 404-5.
[39] For how gender affects networking in other contexts, see Susan Durbin, "Creating Knowledge through Networks: A Gender Perspective," *Gender, Work & Organization* 18, no. 1 (2011), 90-112.

extensively studied, I thus provide new evidence for how it operated in this authoritarian context. It had another impact, however, on the perception of politics as absent from the women's pages, an important theme in this thesis.

The overlap of gender discrimination with discrimination related to union membership caused the former to be underestimated. In peninsular Malaysia (but not East Malaysia), journalists could join the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) Malaysia, and both *Utusan* and *BH* had active chapters during this period. All but one of the respondents who mentioned it, saw the union as being women-dominated. Norila, who was NUJ president (1998-2010), spoke of discrimination due to union activism, rather than in relation to gender.[40] This activism could have been because women could gain access to otherwise male privileges through the union. Union officials might also refuse promotions as they felt a responsibility to their members. For example, third generation *BH* journalist Mona Ahmad (1997-present) said:

> They offered me a promotion last month, but I rejected it because I'm still with the union, so I have that responsibility, settle that first… You know, in NUJ… here, all are ladies, because the guys don't want. And then they say, because you're all ladies, people don't respect. We do the work and then (peters off)[41]

Thus, the responsibilities were given to the women, but credit claimed by the male office-bearers at a national level. Second generation *Utusan* journalist Non Einai (1979-2008) said that union activism provided rewards that were not available in the more male-dominated newsroom hierarchy. "I travel a lot, but they didn't realise it wasn't for *Utusan*. It was … for the union."[42] Thus, there was a correlation between women's activism in the union and their lack of opportunities in the traditional power structures: While union activism may have exacerbated problems women face with career advancement, it was also a by-product of those problems. Even within the union, there was a feeling that the contribution of women was often overlooked, as Mona's quote shows.

Women also faced discrimination in progressing their career through the newsroom. The construction of the family; the role of women as primary carers for children (and others) and the perception of maternity leave as a privilege were barriers to promotion.[43] Nurul Adlina said "when you come back after giving birth, absence for two months, during that time, 'oh, you have been gone for two months,

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[40] Norila, interview.
[41] Mona, interview.
[42] Non Einai, interview.
[43] For the UK experience, see Karen Ross, "Women at Work: Journalism as En-Gendered Practice," *Journalism Studies* 2, no. 4 (2001), 532-3.

what do you know'."[44] Again, women who did not acknowledge discrimination often recognised that women faced difficulties returning to the newsroom after giving birth. Maimunah said, "The boss says the problem with women is so many *cuti* [holidays]."[45] Thus, the male hierarchy viewed maternity leave as a privilege bestowed upon women, denying the labour involved in unpaid care giving.[46]

Some respondents also noted how family commitments restricted their career opportunities. Nurul Adlina, on why she resigned as a journalist, said: "My daughter has to go to tuition. My husband travels a lot overseas, so no-one can send her... so I think, to be fair, I've worked until 35, and she's my only child. But I do miss being a journalist."[47] Thus, she assumed caring responsibilities that meant she could not continue her career as a journalist. Nurul Adlina echoed the framing used by Marhaini, who says she chose to leave her position with *BH* because her transfer request from Johor Bahru to Kuala Lumpur (to be with her partner) was ignored. However, Marhaini said:

> Now when I look at it, I think the male journalists face the same problems. They may have been transferred to state, and then they have to be separated from their family and all that, so I cannot put it like it is a gender discrimination or what.[48]

According to second generation *BH* journalist Damia (a pseudonym, 1983-1996), transfers away from the capital were often a stepping stone for promotion.[49] At the state level, journalists had to take on more responsibility, and were exposed to a wide range of beats and experiences, which equipped them with skills needed for more senior positions.[50] In Malaysia, as elsewhere, both in policy and in practice, women are wives and mothers, whose relationships take precedence over their careers. Marhaini's request to return to the capital, to join her husband, however, hides the uneven power structures within marriage. There is an assumption (for example, in legislation on spousal rights to citizenship) that a woman must follow or accommodate her spouse, with little expectation of the reverse.[51] Prahastiwi Utari and Pam Nilan note this dynamic in Indonesia, where female radio presenters were relegated to administrative tasks when they married.[52] So while Marhaini says that men may face the "same" problem, these are often not choices men have to make. This expectation that women

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[44] Nurul Adlina, interview.
[45] Maimunah, interview.
[46] The gendered nature, cost and prevalence of unpaid work is examined in Veerle Miranda, "Cooking, Caring and Volunteering: Unpaid Work around the World," in *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers* (Paris: OECD, 2011), 6-32.
[47] Nurul Adlina, interview.
[48] Marhaini, interview.
[49] Damia interviewed Bangsar, 26 January 2014.
[50] See also Tiung et al., "Women in Journalism World." This article notes (p23) that women are less willing to travel, compared with their male colleagues, affecting their career options.
[51] For example, the Immigration Act 1963, Section 12, refers to endorsement of "names of wife and children" on permits and passes, but there is no similar provision for husbands.
[52] Utari and Nilan, "The Lucky Few," 73.

prioritise family over career is reflected in the National Policy on Women 1989. The second line begins "Whether they are wives, mothers, or workers earning a wage", thus framing women primarily in the context of their relationships.[53] In 1988, the Columbia Journalism Review ran an article, similarly asking if mothers could be journalists (maybe, but not in the US);[54] while more recently feminist media scholar Louise North examined how parenting is framed as a choice Australian female, but not male, journalists make, with implications for the careers of the former, but not the latter.[55] In both examples, the respondents framed their decision to leave a position within the newspapers as being about making a choice, choosing family over career. This framing is consistent with that of a neoliberal subject who is, as Lois McNay argues in her exposition on Michel Foucault's writings, "the author of irreducible, atomistic and non-transferable choices", an individual who is synonymous with a risk-taking enterprise.[56]

Personal relationships also affected careers in other ways. Damia said:

> Before I got married, my husband was also from the NSTP [owners of *BH*]... So they asked my husband-to-be at that time, are you two serious, because we are thinking of transferring her out of KL. And of course my husband-to-be at the time said, yes, we are going to get married, to avoid me getting a transfer.[57]

Rather than offering a promotion or the decision to Damia, the editors deferred to the decision of her boyfriend. Damia also found her working environment affected by her spouse once they were married: "My husband was head of circulation, I was in editorial, so I was in an awkward position. Whenever there was a problem with circulation, the boss would fight, and I would become the butt of jokes, he would make fun." While she does not say explicitly, Damia implies that these "jokes" were sexual, and undermined her authority in meetings in a way that similar jokes may not have affected, or been made about, a male colleague.[58] Thus, a woman's personal relationships had a direct impact upon their working environment in gendered ways.

Gender had an impact upon progress in other ways. Salbiah clearly related her slow rise through pay scales to being female. She says, "When I joined *Berita Harian* on 6 December 1986, they paid me as

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[53] "*Sumbangan mereka sama ada isteri, ibu serta pekerja yang mempunyai gaji"* "Dasar Wanita Negara." This framing is repeated throughout the document.
[54] Mary Ellen Schoonmaker, "The Baby Bind: Can Journalists Be Mothers?," *Columbia Journalism Review* 26, no. 6 (1988), 33-9.
[55] North, "Still a 'Blokes Club'."
[56] Lois McNay, "Self as Enterprise: Dilemmas of Control and Resistance in Foucault's the Birth of Biopolitics," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 6 (2009), 61.
[57] Damia, interview.
[58] Similar dynamics are examined in an Australian context: North, "'Just a Little Bit of Cheeky Ribaldry'?"

a fresh graduate, and it was in the C band, for four years, okay. Then they promote me to B grade, but they bar me for eight years at the top."[59] She was arguing that this progress was slow, because she was female. This perception was reinforced by Marhaini who said: "[based on her performance] they should have promoted her to a higher level, then suddenly you see there is a male reporter, *yang lebih rendah* (lower are) his qualifications, or [he is] *pasti baru* (just new) and they have promoted him."[60] Here she also drew attention to the other factors upon which promotion might be based, qualifications and experience, and noted that a woman may meet all these criteria, but would not be promoted.

Other respondents, however, argued that women in Malaysia face fewer obstacles than women elsewhere, in terms of career advancement.[61] Sa'adah said that in the UK in the early 1990s:

> it was such a big thing that a female was being appointed to the board of directors of a major company. The mind boggles. To me, we have better opportunities here, as a female, considering that we are ... a Muslim country, and yet, you know, in spite of that, we are quite emancipated in so many ways.[62]

What is interesting here is the positioning of Malaysian women as being better off than women in the UK. Sa'adah drew attention to the position of women leaders in a country from the global north, expressing a gleeful indignation at the lack of progress women had made in a male-dominated industry in the UK. The implicit contrast is that in Malaysia, women leaders, at least in engineering, were more common. She was thus telling a story against a perceived narrative of feminism as a Western phenomenon, making allusions to the colonial history of Malaysia as well as to its positioning at the time of the interview, post-September 2011.[63] Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad likewise frames feminism as attempting to eradicate difference between men and women:

> And because men wear trousers, women too wear trousers. But still… men remain men and women remain women; they are still not the same. Thus the strange struggle continues.[64]

Sa'adah reflects this view of feminism as superficial and Western, also a theme brought up by leaders

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[59] Salbiah, interview.
[60] Marhaini, interview.
[61] According to World Bank figures, female participation in the workforce, as a percentage of women aged 15+, in 1990 was 43% for Malaysia; 53% for the United Kingdom; 52% for Australia; and 56% for the United States. According to the Sixth Malaysia Plan, Table 16-2, women made up 40% of professional and technical workers in 1990.
[62] Sa'adah, interview.
[63] These are examined in Laura J. Shepherd, "Veiled References: Constructions of Gender in the Bush Administration Discourse on the Attacks on Afghanistan Post-9/11," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8, no. 1 (2006), 19-41.
[64] Mohamad, *The Challenge*, 69-70.

in *Wanita* Umno.[65]

This opposition to feminism was exacerbated when respondents identified closely with the ruling party and specifically contrasted the situation of women in Malaysia with those in other countries and the image held by "others" of Malaysia. Third generation *BH* journalist Jamhariah Jaafar (1987-2003) said:

> Like the American journalists, before they come over to Malaysia... Malaysia is bad, Malaysia is Islamic, Malaysia is backward. But during that period, because we did the exchange journalists... I asked him [her friend] to make an appointment with Dr Mahathir, for these five ...American journalists. …. And surely, they come back and apologise.[66]

There was a defensive reaction to the questioning of an "other" regarding the position of women within the newspaper hierarchy related to the position of women in Malaysia more generally. Thus, discrimination affected women's career progress and experience of working in the newsroom, but they were likely to underplay the extent of discrimination due to identification with the male hierarchy, identification with the ruling party and opposition to Western feminism.

Generally, respondents who mentioned remuneration assumed that there was no difference in pay between male colleagues and themselves, due to the replication of pay grades from the civil service. Non Einai, however, said tertiary education was not taken into account in calculating the pay women received.[67] As a single mother, whose journalist partner had been killed in a road accident when her only child was a baby, Non Einai appeared particularly sensitive to the issue of pay, and it came up repeatedly in her interview. Here she related how she turned down advancement because of the poor pay rise that came with it:

> ..at the end of the month, I got a letter, he [her editor] recommended me for promotion. So, when the letter came, of course, I asked for the salary, because I have more responsibility to do. Then he gave me a two hundred dollar pay raise. I was so disappointed, I just felt like crying… I went to see the *Ketua Pengarah*, the chief editor at that time… [he said] If you want more than two hundred, you know what you are doing? Your salary will be more than the chief sub-editor, your immediate boss. …[But] of course, I am a graduate. Oh [said the editor], but he has been working here longer than you. Then I told him, in that case, I am not accepting this promotion.

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[65] Fatima Hashim, head of Kaum Ibu (1956-72), often denounced Western feminism as inapplicable to Malaysia, see Ting, "Khadijah Sidek and Tan Sri Fatimah Hashim: Two Contrasting Models of (Malay) Feminist Struggle?," 6-7.

[66] Jamhariah Jaafar, interviewed Bangsar, 27 March 2014. The meeting she mentioned took place while Mahathir was an Umno Prime Minister.

[67] Non Einai, interview.

Non Einai refused to take on additional responsibilities without adequate remuneration, challenging her bosses' assumptions that they could overlook her qualifications in their decisions. Her male boss did not have the same qualifications, and thus should have been on a different pay scale than her. Non Einai perceived this as gender discrimination, that her career progress was limited because she was a female graduate faced with "cocky" male bosses with fewer formal qualifications.

Relations in the newsroom also included a class dimension. While scholars tend to analyse Malaysian society and politics in race-based terms (thus helping to police and perpetuate the racial divides in Malaysia), class remained an important cleavage.[68] Rosnah was both from a "good family" and university educated. Though her student activism and good academic results contributed to her success in *Utusan*, they were insufficient to explain her meteoric rise and subsequent political career.[69] The number of women who, despite celebrated careers and/ or exemplary academic records, rose to become leader writers was very small: she is one of two whose by-lines appeared regularly in the editorial pages during this period, the other being Adibah Amin (also from a well-connected background).[70] Both were talented, but class helped these women surmount barriers placed by gender.[71]

Thus, while the story of gender discrimination was constant over the period studied, the nuances of it, related to matters such as tertiary education and the *dakwah* movements (discussed below), changed in inflection. The substance – that women were less likely to be promoted, were unable to access the highest positions in the papers, and progressed more slowly – remained constant. This research shows the relation between the respondents' perceptions of gender discrimination and the discourse on feminism in in an authoritarian system, at both a national level and a party level. Next, I explore how newsroom culture also had gendered impacts, and how these changed over time.

The newsroom culture

The male culture of the newsroom disproportionately impacted female journalists.[72] Third generation

[68] Few analyses of class in Malaysia rival Jomo, *A Question of Class*.
[69] Her rise mirrors that of anointed women in the early BBC, see Kate Murphy, "'New and Important Careers': How Women Excelled at the BBC, 1923–1939," *Media International Australia* 161, no. 1 (2016), 18-27.
[70] Her mother was prominent in the struggle for Merdeka: Adibah Amin, *As I Was Passing* (Petaling Jaya: MPH Group Publishing, 2007), xiv.
[71] The same was true of other prominent journalists, such as Azah Aziz: Zaharah Nawawi, *Azah Aziz: Kartika Di Langit Seni (Azah Aziz: Star in the Art Sky)* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2002), 1-7.
[72] I am not arguing that men were not humiliated through rites of passage in the newsroom, particularly early in the papers' histories, but that during the period examined here, women were disproportionately affected. For a disturbing look at the humiliation of men, see how Ali Salim was forced to strip to prove that he had been circumcised. Ali Salim, "A Pioneer in Malay Journalism." In *A Samad Ismail: Journalism & Politics*, edited by Cheah Boon Kheng. Kuala Lumpur: Singamal Publishing, 1987, 63.

BH journalist Salina Abdullah (1992-present) said “when I first joined, it's a male world. They are so blunt, so frank, and very vocal, and I'm not so used to it."[73] Yet, she joined when there were significantly more women than there had been previously.[74] Respondents also referred to intimidation by male colleagues. Mona said of the bosses yelling at her, "that was helping us learn", thus seeing the harassment as a rite of passage.[75] Maizura, however, related “When I first came to *Berita Harian*, the Assistant General Editor called us, the new people, to his office, he looked at me as if to say, you, woman, want to be a journalist.”[76] She said that women were subject to more testing than their male colleagues, in part she said because the editor was an "MCP" (male chauvinist pig).

Words such as “not fair”, “arrogant” and “strict” came up repeatedly, although most of the women also said that they eventually cultivated friendships with their bosses.[77] Many respondents framed relations within the newsroom in familial metaphors, a pattern also seen in Tiung Lee Kuok et al's interviews with women journalists in Sabah. The use of familial metaphors was more prevalent in first and second generation journalists than in those of the third generation.[78] Thus, first generation *Utusan* journalist Normala Hamzah (1974-2007) said:

> We work as family. And one thing I bear in mind is teamwork. When you have a good team, very understanding, taking care of each other, I think there’s no more problems, we can work, no problem. It happened that I am the oldest among them, even my *ketua pengarah* [editor-in-chief] is younger than me, so everyone treated me as an elder sister, so it’s easier to work.[79]

The family is an ambivalent metaphor, usually framed by the respondents in a context of kinship, but also evoking one of the most potent symbols of patriarchy.[80]

Some respondents identified a cultural element to the discrimination. Zaharani said “Malay men are

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[73] Salina Abdullah interviewed *BH* office, 11 March 2014.
[74] As explored in the Introduction, see also Mohd. Hamdan Adnan, "Women and the Media in Malaysia," in *AMIC Seminar on Women and the Media in Asia* (Singapore: Asian Media Information and Communication Centre, 1987), 1-34.
[75] Mona, interview. This dynamic has been explored in van Zoonen, "One of the Girls?," 34-8.
[76] Maizura, interview.
[77] Five respondents (Marhaini, Melati, Non Einai, Norfatimah Ahmad [interviewed *BH* office, 10 March 2014], and Salina) directly used these words, while another six (Damia, Norila, Nurul Adlina, Salbiah, Zaharani and Zara [pseudonym, interviewed *BH* office, 7 February 2014]) related incidents of being shouted at or similar during interviews.
[78]Around half of the first and second generation journalists used familial metaphors, while only one of the third generation – whose father worked in the same newsroom. See also Tiung et al., "Women in Journalism World," 23.
[79] Normala Hamzah, interviewed Bangi, 8 April 2014.
[80] See Yiannis Gabriel, "Beyond Happy Families: A Critical Reevaluation of the Control-Resistance-Identity Triangle," *Human Relations* 52, no. 2 (1999), 179-203. In a Malaysian context: Maznah Mohamad, "Making Majority, Undoing Family: Law, Religion and the Islamization of the State in Malaysia," *Economy and Society* 39, no. 3 (2010), 360-84.

so rooted in their tradition, and most of them believe a woman should be a good wife. A good wife means we are being used more or less (pause) like a doormat."[81] As her words were in the context of how being an outspoken woman affected her career, she was saying that this attitude extended to the newsroom, that women journalists were seen as being wives first and journalists second; and that they occupied a lower position than men both within the family and within the newsroom. This perception was borne out by my analysis of the leader pages, as shown in the next two chapters.[82]

Another finding was that the pattern of gender relations clearly evolved over time. Many of the respondents identified changes due to the influx of women into the newsrooms in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This influx was not the only factor, as new technology has also helped to shift newsroom culture. Second generation *BH* journalist Seri Intan said "Those days, we were more open, all of us, very vocal in terms of work. But now they are more into IT, they are different, those days are different."[83] Other changes came about because of wider socio-cultural changes due to processes of Islamisation. The changes contributing to the less hostile newsroom included less shouting, due in part to no typewriter din; no smoking in the newsroom; and a change in how women (and possibly men) conducted themselves.[84] All these changes contain cultural elements, and most were seen by respondents as being linked to more women in the workplace, and a shift from the male-dominated values of the past. Third generation *BH* journalist Norfatimah Ahmad (1994-present) said:

> Last time, the bosses, if *marah* [angry], he can always say *swearing* or things like that, it was normal. But nowadays, my colleague, two years back, in *Mesyuarat* Umno [General Assembly, 2012], one of my boss said *maki tau memang mencarut* [you know, really swearing], and she cried because *rasa malu* [felt ashamed]. But for me, *yang dah lama biasa* [it's normal], we all *tak kisah* [don't care]*, sebab dah biasa* [because it's normal], but she cried.[85]

Thus, younger journalists were seen as less able to cope with behaviour that had been normalised for the older journalists.[86] These patterns of gendered behaviour and the assumptions behind them had

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[81] Zaharani, interview.
[82] Thus, even the comparatively progressive Federal Territories Islamic Family Law Enactment 1984, holds that maintenance can be withheld from a wife/ former wife if she is *nusyuz*, defined as one who "unreasonably refuses to obey the lawful wishes or commands of her husband" (Section 59). See also Stivens, "'Family Values' and Islamic Revival."
[83] Seri Intan, interview.
[84] While female signs of piety are more visible, such as the headscarf, male attempts to emulate the character of the Prophet Muhammad may have also resulted in more "simple, meditative and courteous" behaviour. Tariq Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons from the Life of Muhammad* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2007), 29.
[85] Norfatimah, interview.
[86] The changes are even more evident when compared with the early days of the newsroom. Adibah Amin noted of A. Samad Ismail in *Utusan* (1946-1958) that "he would display his rich repertoire of dirty words until the girls who were not yet hardened to his ways would hide their faces in painful embarrassment." Adibah Amin,

an impact on how the malestream hierarchy perceived the women's pages, explored below.

Malestream journalists and women on the margins

The margins are key sites of instability for hegemony, as discussed through the idea of decentering in the work of Geraldine Muhlmann.[87] She argues that there is a balance between the ideal public that is knowledgeable and political, and thus requires a journalism that serves that public; and the anti-democratic assumption of journalists as an elite whose job it is to inform and educate an otherwise ignorant public. Journalism that works on the boundaries of uncommunicable stories help to reveal an ideal that is beyond this dichotomy, which is only possible from the margins of a system or situation.[88] Decentring in the Malaysian newspapers, therefore, comes from attempting to tell women's stories in a malestream publication. Yet, what appears marginal from one perspective, may be central from another. The women's pages were marginal from the heart of government, but were central from the perspective of a subsistence farmer living in a rural area.[89] The latter may not have read the papers, but was often the subject of stories in the *Utusan* women's pages.[90] Thus, reporters in the women's pages were at the heart of the authoritarian order and *simultaneously* near the margins of that order.

Maimunah's story of how the women's pages in *Utusan* began is insightful:

> After one year, then they asked me to do the women pages, I started the women's pages in *Utusan Malaysia* in 1968. At that time, once a week, every Thursday. I said, I don't know, because I'm new. My chief editor, En. Mohd Nor... he said you have written many things about (single mothers)... You can catch the story, do in-depth about the women's problems, all that. At first, I don't understand what they want me to do, but after I write, they said, ***this*** is what we want. So, after this, they said...make the story like this... and put it in the women's page, once a week. About writing for the *Utusan* women's page, I had to be a reporter as well. I said, I don't have time. They said, you must find time! You must find time, day or night, I don't

"The Man and His Myth," in *A Samad Ismail: Journalism & Politics*, ed. Cheah Boon Kheng (Kuala Lumpur: Singamal Publishing, 1987), 82.

[87]Geraldine Muhlmann, *Journalism for Democracy* (Cambridge; Malden: Polity Press, 2010), 215-21.

[88] Muhlmann looks at the boundary in relation to an extreme event, the genocide in Rwanda, which illustrates the boundary between those who have lived through the genocide and those who have not, as the boundary of the legibility of experience. The boundary of the journalism in this thesis is the more everyday boundary between the experiences of men and women in a gendered, patriarchal system.

[89] A similar point is made in Paola Bacchetta and Margaret Power, *Right Wing Women: From Conservatives to Extremists around the World* (New York; London: Routledge, 2002), 4-7.

[90] While there are no regional breakdowns of statistics on readership, media consumption in a Kelantanese village was explored by anthropologist Mohd Dahari Othman, indicating low levels of newspaper readership. Mohd Dahari Othman, "Communication and Charisma: A Case Study of Religious, Political, and Social Forces in a Malay Village" (Ph.D., The University of Iowa, 1990), 170-6. *Utusan* framed itself as the paper of the lower classes, thus there were various stories on the working poor, e.g. Mohd Khiri Che Teh, "*Siti Popularkan Keropok Ubi* (Siti Popularises Potato Crisps)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 9 January 1996, 25.

> care...[91]

Apart from noting how the pages started, this passage shows the dynamic between the male editor and a junior reporter with only one year's experience and a Form Five education. She was being given extra responsibility, initiating the women's pages. There was no discussion of an increase in pay, instead she was expected to take on additional responsibility, without remuneration. A similar case of increased responsibility without increased remuneration was told by Non Einai, as cited earlier.[92] Her response was to refuse the promotion, rather than to take on the additional responsibility. While it would be naïve to extrapolate the gender relations within the two newspapers from these episodes, they build upon the earlier section on male culture.

Respondents perceived the women's desk as being inferior or less important than the "real" news conducted elsewhere, as Damia said:

> When you read about journalism, study about journalism, and you watch movies about journalism and on TV, that is what they show us! Not the women's desk! Some great movies on journalism, *ada* [like] that Richard Nixon movie, the two journalists [Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, 1972-1974] who brought down the President. So when you watch all that, you are inspired by the newsroom, the excitement of the newsroom. At that time it was like a downgrade...[93]

Others said the women's desk had no opportunities for promotion.[94] Those who didn't work on the desk were disparaging. The desk was seen as a place for women with less ability, whose attention was on family not career.[95] One respondent did not mention the women's desk when relating their work history, though I had contacted her because her byline was on the women's pages.[96] The women's pages, thus, were positioned both by those in the malestream and those who had worked on them as being marginal to the "real" business of the paper, framed primarily as politics.

Writing on the margins

The relegation of women's news to second-class status also affected the perception of matters such as censorship. Repeatedly, although respondents said that censorship did not affect the women's pages or the entertainment pages, those who had worked in these parts of the paper related more

[91] Maimunah, interview.
[92] Non Einai, interview.
[93] Damia, interview.
[94] Maizura, interview; Sa'adah, interview.
[95] Rosnah, interview; Jamhariah, interview. Marhaini (interview) spoke about "other desks" than news being more relaxed.
[96] Salina, interview.

stories of censorship. In contrast, Rosnah, who worked on politics, shared how the only time she experienced censorship was when she had not gone through appropriate channels – bypassing the Prime Minister's approval – to get an interview with the head of State, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.[97] The resulting stories were published after a delay. Thus, censorship was a result of a breach in protocol rather than material being out of bounds.

In contrast, the most blatant case of censorship and intimidation in the responses came from Fariza, who worked as entertainment editor. The story was a gossip item that mentioned no names, but alleged that a "*tokoh politik*" (politician) was intimate with a television "personality":

> At that time I was in Hong Kong attending a music festival. At 12'o'clock midnight, I got a call from my boss, En. Johan Jaafar. He was really mad at me, and asking me who wrote the gossip about an influential individual that came out in *Hai* magazine. … he said that you know the police wants to interrogate me. He insisted that I send him a report by fax on what happened and who is the source of the story. So I did a report, I sent to him... And you know what Encik Johan said to me? The police wants to meet me at the airport! What? The police want to meet me at the airport! I assume he was just trying to intimidate me! ... So I went [to the police headquarters]. And they asked me, they interrogate me, who gave me this news, I said I got it from so-and-so, why is my boss getting so angry? … So I told him [Johan], I don't think I've broken any journalism ethics, I've done nothing wrong, I didn't mention any names, but you are the boss, you have the right to put me anywhere. But I am not wrong.[98]

Despite her experiences, Fariza stated, "It was less an issue, censorship was based more on political issues." Also, related to the following section, Fariza frames her behaviour as ethical even though she revealed her source to the police, contrary to widely held journalism principles about protecting the identity of sources.[99]

The idea that writers concentrating on politics were those who faced censorship was ingrained, and mentioned by almost every respondent who didn't work on politics. Other respondents who spoke in detail about censorship or adverse repercussions from their stories included third generation *Utusan* journalist Azlinariah Abdullah (1995-2007), Damia, Maimunah, and Maizura, all of whom worked on the women's desk. Story arcs that push against the boundaries of what could be reported include Azlinariah's coverage of Rohingya refugees; Maizura's coverage of women and HIV/ AIDS, including a controversial 'Say No to Husband' campaign, which was censored; and Damia's story about a maid

[97] Rosnah, interview.
[98] Fariza, interview.
[99] Protecting sources was, for example, mentioned by Norfatimah in her interview.

who had been abused while working in a royal household.[100] Thus, in the respondents' testimonies all the episodes of censorship of issues, rather than personalities, occurred by those working on the women's pages.

As with my respondents, my initial assumption was that the women's pages were likely to escape censorship due to their marginal status, but that censorship would be felt by those writing about politics. Rosnah, who wrote leaders, however, said, there was "not censorship in the newsroom."[101] The writers who were entrusted to write political stories were expected to know what to write, as Jamhariah said:

> Unless you are very, very negative, or you are very outspoken person, and you want to go against the government. That's a different thing. But people, management people, will never select anybody to be an analytical writer if you are that sort of person. Everybody in the features desk already knows what they have to do, what they have to write. They are the senior writers, they don't have to be monitored all the time.[102]

Senior writers, therefore, were an integral part of Umno's apparatus for managing public opinion, because selection to that role precluded having a different perspective. A person who was not committed to the same vision as Umno could not be trusted to write leader articles or politics in the newspaper. Hence, there was no need for either self-censorship or overt censorship, as the lead writers had internalized Umno values.

The only respondents who reported censorship on a political issue were third generation *BH* journalist Zara (a pseudonym, 1996-present), in relation to the highly politicised 1999 trials of former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim;[103] and Nurul Adlina, in covering opposition rallies during the 1995 election.[104] The latter however framed this in an interesting way, saying "you know that what you file is just to input the bosses or to inform the government". Thus, she framed being a "responsible journalist" as gathering information, even though she knew it would not be published, that her role in these instances was primarily as an informant. She claimed she was not censored, as she saw these assignments as background research rather than newsgathering.

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[100] Any of these stories that were published, were published outside the days analysed. As the papers were not digitised, a computerised search was not possible.
[101] Rosnah, interview.
[102] Jamhariah, interview.
[103] Zara interviewed *BH* office, 7 February 2014.
[104] Nurul Adlina, interview.

Editors relegated journalists to the women's desk, in contrast, because they lacked the ability to "know what they have to do", a political skill. The journalists, as discussed below, had a desire for reform, one way this “negative” behaviour manifest. The reporters working on the women's pages, because they were unreliable, were subject to more scrutiny than those in politics, despite the perception, discussed above, that the women’s pages were apolitical. The reporters were not as trusted. This important finding was unsettling, as my assumption had been that the women's pages would escape censorship. As discussed in more detail below, five of the seven journalists covering women or entertainment related incidents of censorship, compared to only two of the ten covering politics. The women journalists were not, however, supporters of opposition political parties or consciously working against Umno in any way. Rather, Umno's hegemony and its maintenance was not among the key motivating factors for those working on the women's pages, in contrast to those working on politics and leader pages.

Those who worked extensively on the women’s desk also said, however, there were opportunities that did not exist elsewhere to pursue issues and set the agenda. Maizura said:

> My expectation [on joining the paper] is that I can do investigative reporting, something relevant to society... But, when I in general, I don't think I can do, but in women, I got a lot of opportunity to do investigative, my boss knew I wanted to do investigative, so I managed to do prostitutes and also the *ajaran sesat* [deviant teaching].[105]

Thus, they could pursue topics outside the agenda set by the political parties which was not possible in other sections of the paper. This freedom to pursue topics is key to the importance of the women’s pages, as it allowed the women working on these pages to construct a “Malay-Muslim woman” who was different from the malestream ideal portrayed in both the newspaper and by male politicians, as explored later.

As their politics or opinions relegated them to the margins of the system, they were more likely to use the spaces available to them in ways that were not directly aligned to the interests of the ruling party. Zaharani, who portrayed herself as fighting for women's rights said, “You are supposed to be fighting for your people's rights, so you must have the right values!”[106] While no other journalist framed her work in such strong terms, the difference between women who wrote for the leader and domestic news pages and those who worked in entertainment and women was particularly stark in response to a question on the role of journalists in society. Jamhariah and Marhaini, for instance, both referenced

[105] Maizura, interview. Deviant teaching refers to teachings on Islam outside the state-sanctioned interpretations.
[106] Zaharani, interview.

giving the public "the right info" and "the right perception" respectively.[107] Further Jamhariah explained "your job is to inform people what the government is doing". Likewise Melati, who worked on the economics desk, said "We need to help the government."[108] In contrast, Azlinariah said "your write-up can help somebody who really needs help", while Maizura, Fariza and Zaharani emphasised the educational role that journalists played.[109] None of the latter four journalists referenced government in the role journalists should play, indicating greater independence from the *BN* machinery than seen in the writers working in the malestream pages.

This freedom could be constrained by the broader political agenda. Thus, Maizura related how she was expected to uncover how "Arqam women are sex slaves."[110] During the mid-1990s, the government arrested senior members of the al-Arqam *dakwah* movement.[111] The arrests, as noted in the Introduction, were part of a strategy of containing the *dakwah* movements when co-option did not work, and they were seen as a threat to those in power.[112] Publicly, the treatment of women was given as a motive for the arrests, thus the women's pages were requisitioned to assist in uncovering "the sex", as Maizura called it. She added that these directions came from outside the women's desk, from "the bosses", that "we tried to get all the bad stories, we don't want good stories." Thus, at times when the women's pages could help to reinforce the government's position, they were expected to follow the "bosses" line, though they were not expected to anticipate this line in advance. The next sub-section shows the resources women used to advocate for their stories, and the constraints they faced.

The women's page writers' failure to adhere to the "script" meant that they were seen to be in need of greater surveillance and censorship. They did not position themselves in opposition to the state or to the *BN* government, but their position of marginality informed their writing. This writing positioned them as "unreliable", in the eyes of their editors and the newspaper hierarchy. One of the resources these women drew on to counteract that perception was their view of themselves as ethical professionals, as I examine next.

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[107] Jamhariah, Marhaini interviews.
[108] Melati, interview.
[109] Azlinariah, interview; Maizura, interview; Fariza, interview; Zaharani, interview.
[110] Maizura, interview.
[111] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Southeast Asian Response to the Clampdown on the Darul Arqam Movement in Malaysia, 1994-2000," *Islamic Studies* 45, no. 1 (2006), 83-119; Camroux, "State Responses to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia," 863-65.
[112] On al Arqam and the state response, see Abdul Hamid, "Inter-Movement Tension among Resurgent Muslims in Malaysia."

Ethics as constraint and opportunity

I focus here on journalists' training and their awareness of codes of ethics and standards of journalism, whether local or international and contrast how malestream and marginalised journalists viewed ethics. My interviews included questions about training in ethics and news values, and how these values were implemented. These questions uncovered whether processes of professionalisation constrained women journalists, especially in as far as the "universal journalist" is a heterosexual male, as discussed in Chapter One.[113] While ethics and professionalism are distinct, there is a high degree of overlap in embodying a "professional" reporter and a commitment to being an ethical reporter. Roberto Herrscher argued, for example, for a universal code of ethics to put journalists on an equal professional footing with lawyers and doctors.[114] In an Indonesian context, Thomas Hanitzsch interrogated whether there was a decline in professionalism following the fall of Suharto due to "a loss of accuracy, objectivity, neutrality, completeness and depth in national and local news coverage", which he examined through a survey on training, the role of journalists in society and respondents' stance towards controversial practice in 2001-2002.[115]

To some extent confirming research by Nafise Motlagh showing that the majority of journalists unfavourably viewed codes of ethics, only two of the respondents brought up the local codes of ethics.[116] Both had been active in the formulation of these codes as well as in more recent debates over the establishment of a Media Council, which included a code of ethics. A (voluntary) Media Council was proposed in a 1999 petition by an informal journalist advocacy group and later in draft legislation, authored by the conservative Malaysian Press Institute and academics Mohd Safar Hasim and Ahmad Murad Merican. Infringements of the (proposed) Code of Ethics would be infringements of the Act, though it was unclear in the draft legislation what penalties would have been incurred.[117]

In her interview, Norila spoke about the drafting of the NUJ's code of ethics, based upon "the UK ethics".[118] Maizura and Zaharani also talked about training in ethics as being at the hands of Australian

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[113] See Henrik Ornebring, "The Two Professionalisms of Journalism: Updating Journalism Research for the 21st Century," in *International Communication Association Annual General Meeting* (Montreal: International Communication Association, 2008), 1-22; Aldridge and Evetts, "Rethinking Professionalism"; Helle Sjovaag, "Hard News/ Soft News: The Hierarchy of Genres and the Boundaries of the Profession," ed. Matt Carlson and Seth C. Lewis, *Boundaries of journalism* (Oxford; New York: Taylor & Francis Books, 2015), 108-9.
[114] Herrscher, "A Universal Code of Journalism Ethics."
[115] Thomas Hanitzsch, "Journalists in Indonesia: Educated but Timid Watchdogs," *Journalism Studies* 6, no. 4 (2005), 493.
[116] Motlagh, "Relationship between Malaysian Newspapers Journalists' Knowledge, Attitude and Law-Ethics Priority and Possible Ethical Behavior," 133-9.
[117] This Bill was never presented to Parliament, but the idea of a Media Council has often been brought up by the government.
[118] Norila, interview.

trainers.[119] From the birth of journalism training in Malaysia, similar Western influence was evident with American John Lent running the first journalism programme at Universiti Sains Malaysia in 1971.[120] Canadian media scholar Augie Fleras argues that "pale-male" views define the media gaze(s), and news outputs are judged by that standard: [121] In Malaysia, Western, English-speaking countries were repeatedly referenced as a source of expertise on ethics. Sa'adah's referencing of feminism earlier repeats this idea, that the West were a contested source of validation and authority.[122] Thus, deviations from the Western code of ethics, such as "development journalism", were measured against that standard.[123]

The most widely distributed code of ethics has been that prescribed by the National Union of Journalists, which consists of just eight principles, based on the International Federation of Journalists' code.[124] These principles, as published on the website, are:

> 1. Respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalists. To defend the freedom of the Press, to deal with the professional conduct of its members and to maintain high ethical standards in journalism.
> 2. In pursuance of this duty he (sic) will defend the twin principles: freedom in the honest collection and publications of news; and the right of fair comment and criticism.
> 3. The journalist reports only in accordance with the facts of which he knows the origin. He will not suppress essential information of falsify documents.
> 4. He will use only fair methods to obtain news, photographs and documents.
> 5. Any published information which is found to be harmfully inaccurate he will do his utmost to rectify.
> 6. He will observe professional secret regarding the source of information obtained

[119] Maizura, interview; Zaharani, interview. During the late 1980s. One of the trainers was identified as Mike Cannon.
[120] Mohd. Hamdan Adnan, "Mass Communication and Journalism Education in Malaysia," *Jurnal Komunikasi* 4 (1988), 67-76; Sankaran Ramanathan and Katherine T. Frith, "Mass Comm Education Young and Growing in Malaysia," *Journalism Educator* 42, no. 4 (1988), 10-2. Cf Merican, "Orientalism in Reporting Religion."
[121] Augie Fleras, *The Media Gaze: Representations of Diversities in Canada* (Vancouver; Toronto: UBC Press, 2011), 36-7.
[122] Sa'adah, interview.
[123] Faridah Ibrahim, "Media Ethics in Malaysia: A Case of Language Objectivity," in *Media Ethics in Asia: Addressing the Dilemmas in the Information Age*, ed. Venkat Iyer (Singapore: Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC) and the School of Communication and Information (SCI), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), 2002), 51-65.
[124] The major difference between this code and the IFJ Code of Principles is that the latter includes an extra point (no. 7) on the "danger of discrimination", which is missing from this list. See World Congress of the International Federation of Journalists, "IFJ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists," http://www.ifj.org/about-ifj/ifj-code-of-principles/.

in confidence.

7. He will regard as grave professional offences the following:

- Plagiarism
- Calumny, slander, libel and unfounded accusations
- The acceptance of a bribe in any form in consideration of either publication or suppression.

8. He recognises in professional matters, the jurisdiction of his colleagues only; he excludes every kind of interference by governments or others.[125]

Compared with other codes of ethics for journalists, including those formulated locally such as the code attached to the Media Council Bill, this list is fairly rudimentary.[126] Thus, I was also interested in whether other ethical considerations would form part of the journalists' responses; and if they could give examples of how these manifested in their daily work.

Four respondents, all senior malestream journalists, responded to the questions on values and ethics by discussing the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984, the Sedition Act 1948 and the Official Secrets Act. None of them mentioned Article 10 of the Constitution, which guarantees "the right to freedom of speech and expression", indicating that the respondents did not begin from the premise of constitutionally guaranteed rights, but instead from an assumed need for containment, as discussed in the Introduction.[127] While debate on the enforceability of a code of ethics and whether that would be desirable was both ongoing and inevitable, the conflation of ethical practice and legislation, particularly in Malaysia, is disconcerting, given the repressive nature of the legislation cited.[128] Each of these laws severely curtails freedom of expression and the public right to information. Restricting the notion of what is "ethical" to abiding by these laws is in direct opposition to principles laid out in the National Union of Journalists Malaysia (NUJM) code of ethics.

Rosnah, for example, referenced legislation when asked about ethics and values, saying "First we have the Sedition Act, we have the Secrets Act, Printing whatever Act, they will inform you."[129] What is interesting here, as with other respondents, was that there was no discussion of the content of the laws and how they affected ethics. Rosnah went on to talk about values:

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[125] National Union of Journalists Malaysia, "NUJ Code of Ethics".
[126] The Media Council code of ethics discussed complex issues such as gender, race and non-discrimination. It was opposed by both civil society and the membership of the NUJM, due to being attached to a Media Council Bill.
[127] Federal Constitution, Article 10. These rights are subject to broad restrictions.
[128] In contrast see Cherian George, "Journalism and the Politics of Hate: Charting Ethical Responses to Religious Intolerance," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 29, no. 2 (2014), 74-90.
[129] Rosnah, interview.

> And, of course, there are limitations to the value, let's say, you cannot say bad things to other religions, you cannot say bad things to other race, including that you cannot make fun of their culture, and the same with your own race, your own culture, because... well I experienced 13 May [violence of 1969].

She was not talking about limitations due to legislation. The reason she posited for curtailing outspokenness was fear of causing violence, rather than fear of legislative repercussions. Thus, the limits she perceived as being in law were internalised as limits to ensure that others were not harmed. Jamhariah also mentioned "the communication law", which reinforces this point, as there was no such law.[130] Thus, there was little evidence that the laws themselves were well understood or actively referenced. Instead, the legislation set the very broad parameters around which an ethical edifice was built. Rosnah was one of the staunchest defenders of the idea that the Malaysian media was free during this period – so her reference to legislation should not be interpreted as a belief that the ethical or professional framework within which journalists operated was strictly defined by the limits of the law. In other words, her ethical constraints were much narrower than those proscribed by legislation, but that the legislative framework was what had been taught as prescribing ethical boundaries during training. The implication, then, is that they perceived themselves as having constructed their own ethical framework within the boundaries of the law – thus Rosnah's reference to her experience of the "race riots" of May 1969 depicts the resources she drew upon in setting up her own boundaries of what should or should not be reported and/ or discussed in the media.[131] Her values were a stronger constraint than the restrictions imposed by legislation, similar to the values displayed by 600 Indonesian journalists in a 2011 survey by Lawrence Pintak and Budi Setiyono.[132]

Ten respondents, both malestream and marginal, talked about news-writing (calling round sources, writing the story, making deadlines), not ethics.[133] Salina said the most important news value to her was "writing ethics":

> You have to know, understand the facts, don't simply write. Responsibility. You have to be very responsible with what you write. To me, the main important thing, first you have to understand. If you don't understand, you have to ask, only then can you write.

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[130] Jamhariah, interview. The Communications and Multimedia Act was passed in 1998. It replaced the former Broadcasting Act and had limited relevance for the press.

[131] Note that there are clear differences here between James Gomez's concept of self-censorship and that practised in these newsrooms. It is not fear of repercussions in terms of action by the state, but fear of the repercussions of "free speech". Cf James Gomez, *Self-Censorship: Singapore's Shame* (Singapore: The Think Centre, 2000), 9-10.

[132] Pintak and Setiyono, "The Mission of Indonesian Journalism."

[133] Azlinariah, interview; Fariza, interview; Maizura, interview; Marhaini, interview; Non Einai, interview; Sa'adah, interview; Salbiah, interview; Salina, interview; Seri Intan, interview; Zara, interview. This comes under some definitions of news values. See Bednarek and Caple, *News Discourse*, 40-1.

Here, she defines being an ethical journalist as attending to the technical details of getting the story right.[134] Responding to Alessandro Portelli's stricture to pay attention to why respondents choose to speak, why they choose to be silent,[135] this response gave Salina the opportunity to foreground her background as a chemist – she was different from other journalists because she could understand and translate technical scientific details. This technical expertise underpinned her understanding of herself as a competent journalist, thus this was the news value that she highlighted.

Respondents also mentioned the need to have reliable sources as an important part of ethics. Azlinariah spoke of the need to use "authentic sources", that "... this is the responsibility of a journalist to tell the truth, but in a credible way."[136] Azlinariah drew the closest connection between the process of writing stories and her perception of herself as a religious individual, and this was apparent in her use, for example, of "authentic" sources, as opposed to credible or verifiable. Later in the interview, she said: "if you want to say something about A for example, and then you support with *hadiths* [sayings of the Prophet] or al-Quran, it will be better for you, the write-up will be more authentic." Her perception of herself as a Muslim had an influence upon how she performed as a journalist, as it did Zaharani and other respondents. This identity, as with Zaharani (explored below), allowed the respondent to use religious sources as legitimation for positions taken. Azlinariah worked on the women's desk, but her primary interest was foreign affairs, the plight of refugees in Malaysia and, particularly, Rohingya refugees from Burma.[137] Given that Malaysia had not signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Refugees, and that the official position was one of non-recognition, this position illustrates how a reporter could use resources, in this case her identity as a Muslim, to set up an alternative position for discourse. Her position was not oppositional, but still questioned the government's position or actions. Justifying one's stance through Islamic texts and traditions was one way journalists undertook this questioning.

Four journalists (Fariza, Melati, Norfatimah and Rosnah), spanning all three generations, mentioned "punctuality" as a news value, with Fariza saying that discipline and punctuality were the "number one" news values to her.[138] Again, being a professional journalist was practicing these values. For

[134] The tension between principles and practise is reflected in the discussions around professionalism in journalism, see, e.g. Aldridge and Evetts, "Rethinking Professionalism," esp. 12-19.
[135] Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different."
[136] Azlinariah, interview.
[137] Malaysia is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. For a discussion of its shifting attitude to Rohingya refugees see Samuel Cheung, "Migration Control and the Solutions Impasse in South and Southeast Asia: Implications from the Rohingya Experience," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 25, no. 1 (2012), 50-70.
[138] Fariza, interview; Melati, interview; Norfatimah, interview; Rosnah, interview.

example, Fariza says, “The influence for discipline is that we get what we want, but if you miss the event it is troublesome to go and ask your friends this and that.” Thus, punctuality and discipline meant the ability to do your job, undoubtedly, a minimal criterion of competence for a journalist, that would be consistent with Fariza’s role as an entertainment journalist, often events- or public relations-oriented, and thus by definition journalism where the agenda is set elsewhere.[139]

This focus could be, at least partially, a direct result of what the newspapers themselves inculcated as ethics. Norila said:

> When I first joined *Utusan*, there were just the guidelines, a few things they put in the employment contract. You have to respect the person who invited you for an occasion or a function, you have to report correctly, you have to dress properly, discipline yourself.[140]

Thus, what was inculcated by the newspapers as “ethics” was ethics as etiquette, a dilution of the political dimension of professional ethics for journalists. As scholarly discussions on codes of ethics illustrate, etiquette is rarely included in these codes.[141] The technical answers, falling outside ethics as professionally defined above, could, however, have been due to the respondents not understanding the question, or, equally likely, deflecting from a potentially uncomfortable discussion on ethics and news. These answers further illustrate a confusion among scholars highlighted by Monika Bednarek and Helen Caple in their book *News Discourse*, on the meaning of “news values”, whether it is a set of rules or criteria for a story; the preferences of the audience; newsworthy values, such as timeliness; or elements of a story, such as brevity.[142] These responses indicate that news values can also be taken as qualities that make a good journalist, demonstrating competence, showing it is a capacious term.

Less explored in the literature, though alluded to by Aldridge and Evetts, is how the weakness of the newspapers' training of journalists allowed journalists to build for themselves a code of ethical conduct which could be used to justify decisions made that went against the editorial hierarchy.[143] While these codes were influenced by social and environmental factors, the lack of institutional norms allowed

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[139]Justin Lewis, Andrew Williams, and Bob Franklin, "A Compromised Fourth Estate?," *Journalism Studies* 9, no. 1 (2008), 1-20; Edward Spence and Peter Simmons, "The Practice and Ethics of Media Release Journalism," *Australian Journalism Review* 28, no. 1 (2006), 167-81.

[140] Norila, interview.

[141] E.g. Herrscher, "A Universal Code of Journalism Ethics"; Ibrahim, "Press Freedom and Ethics with Accountability: Premises and Constraints"; Shakuntala Rao and Lee Seow Ting, "Globalizing Media Ethics? An Assessment of Universal Ethics among International Political Journalists," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 20, no. 2-3 (2005), 99-120.

[142] Bednarek and Caple, *News Discourse*, 40-1. See also Helen Caple and Monika Bednarek, "Working Paper: Delving into the Discourse: Approaches to News Values in Journalism Studies and Beyond," (Reuters Institue for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford, 2013), 2; "Rethinking News Values: What a Discursive Approach Can Tell Us About the Construction of News Discourse and News Photography," 436-8.

[143] Aldridge and Evetts, "Rethinking Professionalism," 8-9.

personal control over setting the parameters of professional and ethical conduct. Norila's experience, however, showed that there could be professional costs to exercising this autonomy.

> When you head the union, you are bound to be 'discriminated' against, they don't give you prominence, they don't give you high profile assignments, because you are regarded as a troublemaker or *pemerontak* (rebel), you are like the opposition group, you are not in their group.[144]

Norila emphasised that if "you are not in their group" you face discrimination, which could also be applied to women's page journalists. I examine this insider-outsider question below, looking at the experience of Zaharani.[145] Both Maizura and Zaharani, marginalised journalists, showed that professionalism and the discourse on ethics were resources that journalists could draw upon to defend and uphold women-centred coverage and stories. To explore this further, I revisit my interview with Zaharani. Zaharani was the respondent who most clearly saw her role as a journalist in terms of promoting and defending the position of women, thus her use of ethics illustrates how women journalists could make use of ethics to create spaces despite the male hierarchy of the newspaper.

Her career as a journalist began at *The Star* in 1973, moving to *Utusan Melayu* (Jawi version of *Utusan*), for better pay and "because I think there is some need for Malay women to work in the Malay papers."[146] Even in the early NEP era, her family was unable to afford to send her to university despite her strong academic performance: "Those days, the Malay community isn't that well-off".[147] Her approach to ethics was markedly different from any of her peers or colleagues. When asked about training on ethics for journalists, she answered: "...we must believe that the people have a right to know, that is very important." Thus, the first ethical principle she mentioned was that "the people have a right to know", principle one of the NUJ code. No other respondent mentioned this right.

Ethics was instrumental to her decision to focus on furthering the position of women. "You must always be very ethical, you must have discipline, otherwise it [furthering people's right to know] will be hard work." In answers to further questions, she tightened this link. "If there is no integrity, how will you fare in this world, with your people? You are supposed to be fighting for your people's rights, so you must have the right values!" Repeatedly, Zaharani drew attention her fight for women's rights in defiance of her editors. Zaharani actively campaigned for a Ministry for Women, a move initiated by

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[144] Norila, interview.
[145] Zaharani, interview.
[146] All quotes in the next three paragraphs from interview with Zaharani, interview.
[147] It is interesting how she conflates community and family, perhaps recognising that educational opportunities increased not as a result necessarily of personal prosperity, but due to the increasing control over resources of the Malay-identifying 'community.

Umno politician Shahrizat Abdul Jalil.[148] Zaharani noted "That was one of the things I fought for, I really got whacked by my editor! But it is worth it... But [I] acted within Syariah compliance. Being a Muslim, there are so many laws you have to regard, you have to work within."[149]

Thus, her ability to take a stance against her editors had various roots. She was working with a high-ranking Umno politician who went on to be the first Minister for Women. She also rooted her campaign in an ethical stance – using here the term "Syariah compliance", which she defined as "working within the Syariah law", and explicitly grounding her arguments in the public's right to know and the equality of women. Thus, Zaharani used religion as a professional resource in a struggle with her editors. Further, Zaharani was not talking about defending a story, a position taken by numerous other journalists. Instead she was defending a campaign for a political course of action – she wanted to be part of the movement for a Ministry of Women, and saw herself as having helped ensure the Ministry was formed.

This story is thought-provoking because it shows the complexity hidden in the process of professionalisation in Malaysia. As noted in Chapter One, Livy A. Visano and others have pointed to how the process of professionalisation establishes norms of behaviour that are rooted in the invisibility of gender, and the norm of the male point-of-view.[150] That these processes took place in Malaysian newsrooms can be seen from the manner in which censorship operates, the perceptions of how it operates, and the position of the women's pages in the hierarchy of the newsroom. There was, however, tension between censorship and the "universal values" of journalism.[151] This tension could be used to advocate for campaigns, such as Zaharani's; or for particular stories, as in Fariza's case – where she explicitly argued "I don't think I've broken any journalism ethics, I've done nothing wrong".[152] Thus, women journalists used ethics as a resource in the face of opposition from the newspaper hierarchy. It is important that Zaharani was not working in opposition to the elite centres of power, rather that she believed that she was helping the *BN* government fulfil obligations it did not fully recognise, working through the centres of power to achieve her objectives.

This use of ethics, combined with their genealogy in Western nations, had an alienating effect upon

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[148] Shahrizat went on to become the first Minister for Women in 2001.
[149] The Ministry was established in 2001.
[150] Visano, "Work, Occupations and Professionalization," 13-4; Kimmel, *The Gendered Society*, 1-51; Brookes and Holbrook, "'Mad Cows and Englishmen'"; Stefano Ba', "Critical Theory and the Work–Family Articulation," *Capital & Class* 41, no. 3 (2017), 475-92.
[151] See Masterton, "Asian Journalists Seek Values Worth Preserving."
[152] Fariza, interview.

other journalists, particularly those closest to the Government and its positions. For example, some respondents specifically condemned commentators who said that press freedom was restricted in Malaysia. Rosnah said, "…people say, oh press freedom is being curtailed in Malaysia. During my time, all the time, I was testing [the limits of press freedom]."[153] Most of the respondents likewise defended the concept that the press in Malaysia was free (at least under Mahathir, 1981-2003), pitting this freedom against a Western concept of freedom of the press. Marhaini spoke disapprovingly of "the West style" of journalists (smoking, drinking).[154] Thus, in concert with their identification with the state and "the government of the day" (Jamhariah), there was a tendency to identify Malaysia as a country where freedom of the press existed and **did not need defending against the interests of the state**.[155] Likewise, in the literature on development journalism, journalists are in partnership with the state to help realise a development agenda.[156] A Western-style code of ethics, in contrast, foregrounds the independence of the journalist, press freedom and the right to criticise – as does the NUJ code of ethics.

This section has shown how ethics and professionalisation acted both as a constraint on behaviour, and acted as a resource that could be used to justify stories or story arcs to those in authority.[157] This use of ethics opened up spaces for women working on the women's pages to work outside the narratives authorised by the ruling coalition, though they were not in direct confrontation with the authorised narrative. Journalists created ways to justify venturing away from the official Umno line.

Conclusion

The assumption of journalists was that those in the upper echelons were those most subject to the control, while those in the lowest echelons were least susceptible to observation. Yet, in practice, the reverse was true. These assumptions, however, molded behaviour. The newsroom mirrors the model of the Jeremy Bentham/ Michel Foucault Panopticon.[158] Cherian George makes a similar point in regard to Singapore, arguing that "The gatekeepers are essentially members of the establishment who... value their insider status in what they regard as a common national project."[159] Thus, censorship of politics writers, constantly under observation and internalising the norms of the political parties, was generally unnecessary.

[153] Rosnah, interview.
[154] Marhaini, interview.
[155] Jamhariah, interview.
[156] See Musa and Domatob, "Who Is a Development Journalist?."
[157] This works both ways, as explored in Aldridge and Evetts, "Rethinking Professionalism," 16-9.
[158] This model was explored in Chang, "*Media Massa Dan Hegemoni*," 93-107.
[159] George, *Freedom from the Press*, 186.

As in the analogy of the Panopticon, those journalists who perceived themselves as less susceptible to the gaze of the watchtower were less controlled by this gaze, regardless of how much they were subject to disciplinary procedures. This perception of comparative freedom allowed for a greater exercise of actual freedom, of pushing against the boundaries of state control. All my respondents, without exception, positioned themselves as supportive of the government in general and the Umno in particular.

Thus, the women's page journalists were on the margins of the power structures of the newspapers and in turn of the state. While the women closest to the centres of power identified most closely with the state and, in particular, with the Umno, those in the women's pages articulated an agenda outside (though, importantly, not in conflict with) the agenda of the centres of power. This is particularly evident in Maimunah's *Di celah-celah kehidupan (Life's nooks and crannies)* column and the *BH* women's pages under editor Delaila Hussain, examined in the next two chapters. To some extent they saw the issues they were concerned with as being outside the purview of party politics, which gave them the latitude to explore positions not being articulated by those structures. This finding is important to my thesis that the women's pages were a site for articulating tensions that did not appear in the malestream pages.

Thus, while my predictions, and the general consensus, of less censorship in the women's pages proved unfounded, the reasons for this were because women in the women's pages perceived themselves as less susceptible to scrutiny, were more likely to engage in investigative reporting and were able to define a news agenda outside of political control.[160] This key finding illustrates that women's page journalists were pushing the boundaries of what their editors considered acceptable, and were less likely to conform to the Umno developmental agenda.

This chapter has thus demonstrated that the press in Malaysia was not monolithic; and begun to show that the women's pages were perceived by journalists and editors as a marginal, apolitical space and that the women journalists in the women's pages were less influenced by a party political agenda than their colleagues in the malestream pages. In the next chapter, I build on these arguments and further argue that the portrayal of women in the women's pages escaped the hegemonic construction of women seen elsewhere in the paper, which does not happen for men.

[160] Within limits. *Wanita* Umno functions form a mainstay of the women's pages, and Maizura spoke in detail of the need for reporters on the women's pages to look for 'sex-scandal' stories involving the adherents of Al-Arqam.

Chapter Four: Evolving constructions of the Malay-Muslim woman in *Utusan Malaysia*

Writing women in the title of this thesis refers both to the women who wrote in the papers, examined in the last chapter, and how women were written, by both male and female journalists. As I examined in the Introduction, despite common ownership through the ruling coalition, the two newspapers, *Utusan* and *BH*, had different histories which were reflected in their positioning within the newspaper market and their positioning in respect to the Umno. The reporters and editors of *Utusan*, examined here, were proud of the paper's close relationship with Umno, and posited an identity between the Malays as a people, the Umno and the paper itself. Yet this relationship was marginal in the women's pages, where, instead, writers helped further the (perceived) interests of women readers, in ways that contested the malestream editorial position. While in *BH* I explore how women journalists pushed boundaries and helped progress a feminist agenda, within limits, here I examine the more constrained ways in which the portrayal of women in the women's pages of *Utusan* differed from the women in the religion and leader pages; how these depictions shifted over time; and their relation to social and political changes happening outside the newsroom.

As discussed in Chapter Two, I use critical discourse analysis (CDA) to pay close attention to both the text and the context, with the explicit aim of uncovering the gendered operations of power. Following methodology such as Jo Angouri and Ruth Wodak's on the discourse surrounding Greece's far-right Golden Dawn party, I have chosen, within the tradition of CDA, to take a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach to stories, concurrently analysing the content at various levels.[1] At the micro-level, I analyse the words chosen and the structure and placement of sentences, that is, why particular sentences or points were placed towards the beginning or end of stories. I also examine how on the meso-level, the stories themselves fit within the newspaper and the narratives being constructed either in the section (such as the leader or the women's pages) or within the paper as a whole; and at a macro level I examine how these two levels relate to political developments within the paper and the broader social context, bearing in mind that texts influence and are influenced by these

[1] Jo Angouri and Ruth Wodak, "'They Became Big in the Shadow of the Crisis': The Greek Success Story and the Rise of the Far Right," *Discourse & Society* 25, no. 4 (2014), 540-65. See also Jim R Martin, "Voicing the 'Other': Reading and Writing Indigenous Australians," in *Critical Discourse Analysis: Theory and Interdisciplinarity*, ed. Gilbert Weiss and Ruth Wodak (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 199-219; Wodak, "Critical Discourse Analysis," 306; Gee and Handford, "Introduction," 1-6. In contrast, see the quantitative approach in Duman, "Gender Politics in Turkey and the Role of Women's Magazines."

developments.[2] Key factors in this broader social context were the contradiction between Umno's increasing rhetorical concern with the position of women, which it articulated in terms of the contest for Malay women's votes vis-à-vis the "backward" agenda of Pas; and Umno's sidelining of women in practice, seen most clearly in the relation between *Wanita* Umno and the malestream party.

The corpus examined is around 4,000 articles from *Utusan*, consisting of articles in the leader, religion and women's pages. Initially, I included articles from the front page of the papers, but found that the style of "straight" news reporting was too different from those of the other pages, so excluded them. On the leader page, I pay special attention to the columns of Faizal Othman and to the *Minda Islam* (*Islamic Thoughts)* and *Bicara Syariah (Syariah Forum)* columns, as it was in these columns dealing with religion that women appeared most often: The leader pages were marked by an absence of women. I then examine advice columns (*Dr Ong, Soal Jawab Agama [Religion Q&A], Kak Nor & Masalah Anda [Sister/ Aunty Nor & Your Problems]*) in both the religion and women's pages of the paper. Again, in the religion page, the advice column was chosen because these columns were those that most frequently acknowledged female readers; comparing and contrasting the advice given in these columns with the advice elsewhere in the paper helps to illustrate the diversity of the ways in which women were represented, and further shows the differences between the women in the women's pages and elsewhere. In the *Wanita* and *Keluarga* (Women's/ Family, referred to as "the women's desk" by respondents) pages, I pay close attention to how the female entrepreneur or businesswoman was portrayed; welfare and charity stories; and the *Di celah-celah kehidupan* (*Life's nooks and crannies*) columns, written by Maimunah Yusof. I first read the articles looking at how language was used and how it evolved, taking extensive notes on emerging themes, then went back and traced how these themes changed over time.

Month/ Year	**Leader articles**	**Women's page articles**	**Religion articles**	**Total**
Oct-Dec 1987	234	210	24	468
Jan-March 1988	213	182	27	422
March 1989	87	77	0	165
March 1990	90	72	0	162
March 1991	86	56	0	142
March 1992	84	67	11	161
March 1993	99	64	15	178

[2] John Richardson has made this point about the complexity of media systems. Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers*, 37.

March 1994	89	62	16	167
March 1995	89	60	16	165
Jan-June 1996	391	310	33	734
March 1997	80	64	8	152
March-Aug1998	450	550	43	1043

Table 4-1: Articles analysed by article type.[3]

***Utusan*'s leader page: Writing the Umno model**

Here, I examine the differences between how men wrote men and women on the leader page; and contrast the production of the "Malay-Muslim woman" by men with the production of women by women on the same pages. I analyse just under 2,000 leader articles across the period, studying how journalists fashioned themselves as writing men and women, how they reconciled their self-perceptions of themselves as independent, professional writers with the censorship and legislative control that was explored in the Introduction and Chapter One. In the latter, I draw both on the oral histories of journalists from Chapter Three and the literature on how journalists perform in the role of journalists, whether through performativity, as explored by Joy Jenkins and Teri Finneman among others, or through boundary repair when journalists fail to adhere to professional standards of behaviour.[4] While the newspapers were subject to rigorous legislation that enforced a culture of self-censorship, the major locus of control over content in *Utusan* was the reporters' identification with the goals and aims of Umno.[5] Thus, the literature on boundary repair, particularly by Dan Berkowitz, is interesting as a point of comparison. Berkowitz illustrates how journalists in newsrooms where political interference, much less control, is minimal, guard the aura of professionalism cultivated by

[3] I have not included articles by wire agencies or the reproduction of speeches. The corpus was, inevitably, affected by the availability of papers, and the condition in which they were available: Some were in poor condition, vandalised or incomplete.

[4] Joy Jenkins and Teri Finneman, "Gender Trouble in the Workplace: Applying Judith Butler's Theory of Performativity to News Organisations," *Feminist Media Studies* 18, no. 2 (2018), 157-72; Dan Berkowitz, "Doing Double Duty: Paradigm Repair and the Princess Diana What-a-Story," *Journalism* 1, no. 2 (2000), 125-43. See also Jo Bogaerts, "On the Performativitiy of Journalistic Identity," *Journalism Practice* 5, no. 4 (2011), 399-413; Dan Berkowitz and Lyombe Eko, "Blasphemy as Sacred Rite/ Right," *Journalism Studies* 8, no. 5 (2007), 779-97; Ronald Bishop, "The Accidental Journalist: Shifting Professional Boundaries in the Wake of Leonardo Dicaprio's Interview with Former President Clinton," *Journalism Studies* 5, no. 1 (2004), 31-43.

[5] This self-censorship differs from the mechanisms discussed in Gomez, *Self-Censorship*, 33-40. It more closely mirrors the exclusion of views famously discussed in Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, 1-35. See also Colleen Cotter, "Women's Place at the Fourth Estate: Constraints on Voice, Text, and Topic," *Journal of Pragmatics* 43 (2011), 2519-33; Michael Schudson and Danielle Haas, "One of the Guys," *Columbia Journalism Review* 46, no. 6 (2008), 63; van Zoonen, "One of the Girls?"

journalists; in a Malaysian newsroom, this process instead involves showing how this aura was maintained in the face of political control and identification with the interests of the political elite.

Men writing the **Melayu Baru**

This section explores how the male writers of the leader page gave prominence to the Umno model of the (male) Malay, the *Melayu Baru*, providing a benchmark against which to compare the portrayal of women in both the leader and the women's pages. Despite an extensive literature on the early years of *Utusan,* there is a dearth of material from the period I am studying, as media scholar Ahmad Murad Merican notes, and what exists from the Mahathir era and after tends to focus on the domestic news pages, rather than on leader or opinion writing.[6] Thus, this section provides new insights into how *Utusan* leader and opinion writers narrated the Malay man, as well as the Malay woman. It has been demonstrated, due to ownership structures and analysis during periods of political vulnerability, that Umno exerted an influence over all parts of the paper, but how this influence manifests in a more everyday fashion has been left largely unexamined.[7]

As noted in Chapter One, the *Melayu Baru* was the local iteration of the neoliberal entrepreneur, perhaps best explicated by then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in his 1999 book, *A New Deal for Asia*, as someone who is hardworking, intelligent and independent from the government, but rooted in faith.[8] The idea of the *Melayu Baru* runs through Mahathir's writings from his 1965 book, *The Challenge*, to a 2015 podcast on affirmative action.[9] Though (male) Malays were exhorted to be independent and entrepreneurial, the political fortunes of Umno were tied to a relation of dependence, as explored in anthropologist A.B. Shamsul's *From British to Bumiputera rule,* among

[6] Ahmad Murad Merican, "Journalism as National Dialogue Platform: Celebrating the News and Opinion," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 155 (2014), 337-40; Liana Mat Nayan et al., "Islam in Malaysian News: The Case of Utusan Malaysia and Sinar Harian," *Regional Conference on Science, Technology & Social Sciences (RCSTSS 2014): Business & Social Sciences* (2016), 333-40; Syed Arabi Idid and Chang Peng Kee, "The Media and Public Agenda among the Malay and Chinese Communities During the 2008 Malaysian General Elections," *Asian Social Science* 8, no. 5 (2012), 107-15; Kiranjit Kaur, "The Media and Migrant Labour Issues in Malaysia: A Content Analysis of Selected Malaysian Newspapers," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 39, no. 2 (2005), 69-90.

[7] Nain and Wang, "Ownership, Control and the Malaysian Media"; Anuar, ""Muzzled"? The Media in Mahathir's Malaysia"; Chang, "*Media Massa Dan Hegemoni*"; Wong, "Asian-Based Development Journalism and Political Elections."

[8] Mohamad, *A New Deal for Asia*, 39.

[9] Mohamad, *The Challenge*; *The Future of Affirmative Action*, podcast audio, Tun Talks.

others.[10] Shamsul observed the relations of patronage in a rural Malay village in Selangor, and how political affiliation affected village development and ties within the village, encouraging dependence upon not the state but Umno. The tension between dependence and the exhortation to independence was also evident in Mahathir's closing address to the Umno General Assembly in 2001, *Malays forget easily*, reminding his audience of the struggles of the party, and urging them to continue to struggle.[11]

The official voice of the Umno can be seen in how this tension manifested and, to a limited extent, was resolved on the leader pages of *Utusan*.[12] The earliest leader article analysed is *Pisang emas dibawa belayar* (sic*., Bananas taken sailing*), from October 1987.[13] The title refers to a famous *pantun* (traditional four-line poem) emphasising the importance of moral duties.[14] The reference without full explication to the *pantun* implied a Malay-identifying audience. It plays on words due to the establishment of the Malaysian Fruit Industry Council (MIBM), which, the writer said means bananas could now travel overseas.[15] The column drew attention to the weakness of the Malays, which made them import Western fruit, rather than exporting fruit: To rectify this problem, the government had set up a council to help promote fruit exports. The inability of Malay(sian)s to export fruit to the West was portrayed as a weakness – Malaysian fruit was much tastier than Western fruit, yet exporting bananas was beyond imagination *(tidak pernah terfikir sebelum ini*). The government was intervening and in a short time *(masa yang singkat*)*,* Malaysian fruit would be available across Europe. The language used here tapped into recurrent themes in speeches by Mahathir. A year later, launching the National Economic Consultative Council on 19 January 1989, he said that previously Malaysia had only exported raw tin and rubber (*bijih timah dan getah mentah*) to the West, but now Malaysia exported electronic components, air-conditioners, children's toys and motorcars (*komponen elektronik,*

[10] On Melayu Baru, see Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, 334-8. On dependence, see Amri Baharuddin Shamsul, *From British to Bumiputera Rule: Local Politics and Rural Development in Peninsular Malaysia* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), 194-219; Marvin L. Rogers, "Patterns of Change in Rural Malaysia: Development and Dependence," *Asian Survey* 29, no. 8 (1989), 764-85; Jason Brownlee, "Bound to Rule: Party Institutions and Regime Trajectories in Malaysia and the Philippines," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 8, no. 1 (2008), 89-118; Peter Whitford Searle, *The Riddle of Malaysian Capitalism: Rent-Seekers or Real Capitalists?* (St Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1998).

[11] Mahathir Mohamad, "Malays Forget Easily," Prime Minister's Office, 21 June 2001.

[12] See also "*Penyelidikan Pertanian* (Agricultural Research)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 2 January 1988, 8; Johan Jaafar, "*Wak Darus Dan Kedai Sederet Di Kampung Kami* (Wak Darus and the Shophouses in Our Village)" *Utusan Malaysia*, 6 March 1995, 6; "*Menangani Kekurangan Usahawan Pertengahan* (Tackling the Lack of Mid-Level Managers)" *Utusan Malaysia*, 11 March 1997, 6.

[13] "*Pisang Emas Dibawa Belayar* (Sic., Bananas Taken Sailing)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 1 October 1987, 6.

[14] The pantun is discussed in Ahmad Murad Merican, "Studying Media in the Malay World: The Science of Budi and Kaba," *KATHA* 11, no. 1 (2015), 23-4.

[15] The implication of a Malay audience was much stronger in other articles, particularly pronounced in the assumption of a Muslim faith and an assumption of the Chinese-as-other (explored below). This framing mirrored how women's magazines and most newspapers in the early twentieth century United States assumed a White reader, see e.g., Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longing*; Cairns, *Front-Page Women Journalists, 1920-1950*.

penghawa dingin, permainan kanak-kanak dan insya-Allah motokar).[16] Thus, he drew attention to the assumed historical economic weakness of the Malays, pointing to a better present/ future, under his leadership, much as the above article does. Likewise, the article implicitly contrasted Malays' weakness with the strength of the former colonisers. While the European past as a colonising power was not made explicit, readers could be expected to draw the inference for themselves, due to theme being repeated frequently on these pages.[17] The article also tapped into fear of re-colonisation.[18] The weakness of the Malays was portrayed as having concrete consequences unless this weakness was addressed. The only authority with the political will and history to do this was Umno, echoing Mahathir's rhetoric in both speeches and in *The Challenge*.[19] The perceived Western desire to dominate the former colonies and the associated fear of particularly Muslim success were repeatedly used (see below) to justify Malay reliance on the government. Such reliance, however, was double-edged. The unwritten question remained of why the Malays were weak, when Umno, whose raison d'être was representing Malay interests, had been in power for over three decades.

The main article on the leader page on 3 October 1987 addressed this conundrum. It harked back to the (apparently) golden past of Melaka, when "the Malays" were traders and engaged in business.[20] This strength was destroyed, primarily by the British, who labelled the Malays farmers, and then enforced this appellation.[21] The Umno government gave training and opportunities to those identified

[16] Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister's Office, "Launch of the Post-1990 National Economy Council Forum", 19 January 1989.
[17] From this month: Azmi Abdul Malek, "10 *Kelemahan Yang Gagalkan Peniaga Bumiputera* (10 Weaknesses Causing Bumiputra Businesspeople to Fail)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 3 October 1987, 6; "*Semangat Bulan Bahasa* (Spirit of National Language Month)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 7 October 1987, 8; "*Mengapa Diplomasi Ekonomi Perlu* (Why Economic Diplomacy Is Necessary)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 9 October 1987, 8; Hashim Hassan, "*SITC, Nasionalisme Dan Sultan Idris* (SITC, Nationalism and Sultan Idris)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 14 October 1987, 8; Chamil Wariya, "*Umno Sendiri Akui Perjuangan Kemerdekaan Tidak Bermula Dengan Malayan Union* (Umno Itself Agrees Independence Struggle Didn't Start with Malayan Union)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 16 October 1987, 8; Abdullah Ahmad, "*Bagaimana 'Survival' Bangsa Melayu Boleh Dipertahankan?* (How Can Malay Survival Be Maintained?)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 19 October 1987, 8; "*Kembali Kepada Kebenaran Islam* (Return to Islam's Truth)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 23 October 1987, 7.
[18] Discussed in Chamil Wariya, "*Seminggu Di Tripoli Rapatkan Libya Dengan Pemuda Umno* (A Week in Tripoli Brings Libya and Umno Youth Closer)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 18 January 1988, 8; Chamil Wariya, "*Serangan Amerika Mengancam Libya* (American Attacks Threaten Libya)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 19 January 1988, 8; Chamil Wariya, "*Terpaksa Batal Penerbangan Kerana Hendak Jumpa Gaddafi* (Forced to Cancel Flight Because Want to Meet Gaddafi)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 20 January 1988, 8; Chamil Wariya, "*Apa Gaddafi Beritahu Kepada Pemuda Umno* (What Gaddafi Told Umno Youth)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 21 January 1988, 8.
[19] E.g., Mohamad, *The Challenge*, 48; "Speech at the Official Dinner in Honour of His Excellency Sir Kingsford Dibela the Governor-General of Papua New Guinea," Prime Minister's Office.
[20] Abdul Malek, "10 *Kelemahan Yang Gagalkan Peniaga Bumiputera*." This is occasionally referenced by Mahathir, e.g. Mahathir Mohamad, "*Upacara Perasmian Kongres Cendiakawan Melayu II* (Official Opening of Malay Intellectuals' Congress II)," Prime Minister's Office, 1 July 1989.
[21] The writers seem unaware of the irony of imitating the colonisers. See Virginia Matheson Hooker, *A Short History of Malaysia: Linking East and West* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2003), 97. See also Mahathir

as Malays, but, according to the article, there were ten weaknesses to be addressed.[22] Each of these weaknesses was individual in nature, and thus the responsibility for future Malay success, defined economically, lay with the individual, not the government. This theme of responsibilization forms an important part of the *Melayu Baru* in the leader pages and by government.[23] Thus, for example, in discussing poverty eradication, the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1990-1995) said an important strategy was to "create the right environment for the poor to utilize their own economic potential in order to develop a self-reliant community."[24] The government created opportunity and infrastructure, but the responsibility for poverty eradication lay, at least in part, in the poor taking up those opportunities, rather than institutional factors such as access to education, healthcare or jobs. There is both contrast and overlap here with, among others, Lois McNay's explication of the neoliberal self as enterprise, which describes the ideal neoliberal individual as a collection of marketable traits and skills, which can be strengthened through training and investment, and which it is the individual's responsibility to grow and market.[25] The key difference between the *Melayu Baru* and the self articulated by McNay is the need for government assistance in overcoming barriers placed by the colonial history of Malay(si)a, and with it continuing reliance on the Umno, politically and economically. In theory, the Umno was working towards eradicating this colonial hangover.

How the paper discussed race was directly related to its relationship with Umno, as explored in the Introduction. James Chin has persuasively argued that the history of the Chinese-identifying Malaysians during this period was one of progressive marginalistion, as they continued to be seen as secondary to the citizenship of Malaysia, in turn perceived as consisting primarily of Malay-identifying Muslims.[26] Likewise, the leader page constructs Chinese-identifying Malaysians as a community

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Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma* (Singapore; Kuala Lumpur: Times Books International, 1970; repr., 1997), 22-31.

[22] The writer, Azmi Abdul Malek, was a manager at Maybank. Azmi Abdul Malek, "*Anak Miskin Mengorak Langkah* (Poor Child Gets It Done)," *Sinar Harian*, 28 February 2017.

[23] See also Zambry A Kadir, "*Kerajaan Patut Adakah Usahasama Terus Dengan Nelayan* (Government Should Have Direct Joint Ventures with Fisherfolk)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 15 February 1988, 8; "*Disiplin Keselamatan Jalan Raya Di Musim Perayaan* (Discipline of Highway Safety During the Festive Season)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 6 February 1996, 6; Wan Abdul Kadir Wan Dolah, "*Peranan Pusat Sumber* (The Role of Resource Centres)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 13 March 1993, 8.

[24] "Sixth Malaysia Plan," ed. Economic Planning Unit (Kuala Lumpur 1991), 44.

[25] McNay, "Self as Enterprise."

[26] James Chin, "From *Ketuanan Melayu* to *Ketuanan Islam*: Umno and the Malaysian Chinese," ed. Bridget Welsh, *The end of UMNO?: Essays on Malaysia's dominant party* (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development, 2016), 171-212. An interesting examination of how food taboos contribute to this process is explored in Theresa W Devasahayam, "Consumed with Modernity And 'Tradition': Food, Women, and Ethnicity in Changing Urban Malaysia" (University of Syracuse, 2001), 61-62. See also Daniel PS Goh, "From Colonial Pluralism to Postcolonial Multiculturalism: Race, State Formation and the Question of Cultural Diversity in Malaysia and Singapore," *Sociology Compass* 2, no. 1 (2008), 232-52; Ting, "Malaysian History Textbooks"; Edmund Terence Gomez, "Tracing the Ethnic Divide: Race, Rights and Redistribution in

separate from its (Malay-identifying) readers. For example, on 12 May 1998 the lead article targets "traders", read as Chinese, who are taking their money out of the country, thus showing themselves to be traitors.[27] This othering was most clear in two columns on the leader page, *Pandangan Akhbar Cina* (View from the Chinese papers) and *Desas Desus Masyarakat Cina* (Chinese Whispers), which claimed to articulate the "Chinese" perspectives on events. These ran only until 1990 and both columns were primarily concerned with the party politics of *BN* component parties, the MCA and *Gerakan*.[28] After the columns' demise, Chinese Malaysians featured as exemplifying hard work and entrepreneurship at the expense of the Malays. The Chinese were competitors against which the Malays were disadvantaged. While the threat was often implied, an occasional example where it became explicit was published in January 1996. In *Bahasa pemancar citra* (Language, the fount of imagery), the writer portrays English and Chinese as the languages of business, to the detriment of those fluent in Malay.[29] In a similar vein, Mahathir discussed how the Chinese are naturally good at business, while the Malays are more accustomed to farming and lack entrepreneurial drive, for example in *The Malay Dilemma*, written in response to the events of May 1969.[30] Again, the presentation in the leader page mirrors the rhetoric within Umno, consistent with the findings of the previous chapter.

Responding to Norman Fairclough's question of whose perspective is privileged in the framing and language used, government discourse was privileged over others, such as the views of fruit growers or exporters in the first example above.[31] This privileging of the government perspective occurs across the leader page. While there is significant research showing how official sources are privileged in other media and other contexts, in this article and elsewhere it is not so much official *sources* that are privileged, but that official *perspectives* underlie all comment and even, as I explore below, criticism. Linguist Huan Changpeng argues that elite sources dominate both Chinese and Australian media, though the different ownership structures result in different ways of reporting and relating to official

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Malaysia," in *Ethnic Futures: The State and Identity Politics in Asia*, ed. J. Pfaff-Czarnecka, et al. (New Delhi; Thousand Oaks; London: Sage Publications, 1999), 167-202.

[27] "*Ahli Perniagaan Lupa Daratan* (Businesspeople Forget the Homeland)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 12 May 1998, 6. See also Chew Hock Thye, "*Pertunjukan Amal Kebudayaan Elit Membuat Hati* (Show of Elite Cultural Practices Disheartening)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 31 March 1990, 6; "*MCA Dan Orang Cina* (MCA and the Chinese)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 2 March 1993, 8.

[28] Other racialized groups are rarely present in these pages. Gerakan is a multi-racial party, but is seen to be Chinese-dominated, see Neil Jin Keong Khor, *Non-Sectarian Politics in Malaysia: The Case of Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia* (Trafalgar Pub. House, 2008), 74-99.

[29] Hassan Ahmad, "*Bahasa Pemancar Citra* (Language, the Fount of Imagery)," *Utusan Malaysia* 17 January 1996, 6.

[30] Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma*, 124-53.

[31] Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, 21-38.

sources.[32] Likewise, official sources were privileged in these papers, as shown in research by Mus Chairil Samani, who found, looking at four Malaysian newspapers including *Utusan* and *BH* in 1990, that not only did elite sources make up 74.5% of sources used in Malaysian newspapers, 74.8% of stories used only one source, other voices were largely absent.[33] My complementary argument is that beyond the attributable statements made by elite sources, the tensions in the *Melayu Baru* were both explicated and resolved in the same way as seen in Mahathir's writings and speeches. This identity further supports the argument made in Chapter Three that the journalists who were able to succeed within the newspapers were those who did not need censorship, because their perspectives were identical with those of the ruling Umno.

Despite this congruence, these journalists perceived themselves as independent professionals. Media scholar Cherian George has investigated this tension between party ownership of newspapers and the insistence by journalists on their professionalism in the context of Singapore;[34] while Pan Zhongdang and Joseph Chan, in the context of China, posit that there is an irreconcilable difference between professional and party journalism.[35] *Utusan* would belong in the latter category. Examining how Malaysian journalists interrogated this tension, and the solutions that they have posited, contributes to our understanding of what professionalism means in different contexts. A fulcrum for understanding this issue is the concept of independence, that is whether journalists were independent of party political influence, and how this was defined. Thus, editor Zainuddin Maidin defended *Utusan* journalists' independence, both in his history of *Utusan* and in his articles on the leader page, evident in the title of his book, which translates as "In Front, Fire, Behind Thorns: The History of *Utusan Melayu*".[36] Yet, there was simultaneously a perceived identity between *Utusan*, Umno and "the Malays" (at least Malay-identifying men), which was sometimes made explicit. In the 17 February 1988 article *Umno hidup semula*, the writer tied the survival of the Malays (the English word was used) was with accepting the newly registered Umno *Baru* (New Umno) as continuing the pedigree of (old)

[32] Huan Changpeng, "Journalistic Engagement Patterns and Power Relations: Corpus Evidence from Chinese and Australian Hard News Reporting," *Discourse & Communication* 10, no. 2 (2016), 137-56. See also, e.g, Roger Fowler, *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press* (London; New York: Routledge, 1991), 120-45; W. Lance Bennett, Lynne A. Gressett, and William Haltom, "Repairing the News: A Case Study of the News Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 35, no. 2 (1985), 50-68.
[33] Mus Chairil Samani, "*Sumber Berita: Analisis Isi Kandungan Empat Akhbar Harian Malaysia* (News Sources: Content Analysis of Four Daily Malaysian Newspapers)," *Jurnal Komunikasi* 8 (1992), 49-63.
[34] George, "Contentious Journalism."
[35] Pan Zhongdang and Joseph Man Chan, "Shifting Journalistic Paradigms: How China's Journalists Assess 'Media Exemplars'," *Communication Research* 30, no. 6 (2003), 649-82.
[36] "*Khabarnya... Awang Selamat* (Awang Selamat's News)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 17 March 1991, 10; Maidin, *Di Depan Api, Di Belakang Duri*, 204.

Umno, stretching back to 1946.[37] The article identified the Malays, their progress and future, with Umno. The editorial also identified the paper with Umno (old and new) to the extent that the article ends with the sentence "*Hidup Umno untuk selama-lamanya*" – (May) Umno live forever.[38] This identity between the paper and the party belied the independence asserted by Zainuddin and the oral histories in Chapter Three. I am interested in how journalists made sense of this role, as professionalism was a resource women journalists drew upon to advocate for stories and story arcs, as shown below and in Chapter Three.[39] To navigate this tension in the leader page, the paper critiqued the government, but it offered advice, not criticism. Thus, for example, on 1 March 1997, A Rashid Ahmad wrote an article persuading the audience of the merits of government policy, making policy recommendations, yet emphasising that Malaysian leaders were ready to meet environmental challenges.[40] While a critique was offered of government environment policy, the article led with praise of government initiatives, before offering suggestions on how the government's good intentions could be implemented. Such space for criticism, however, was dependent upon context: Support for Umno was unwavering in times of crisis. During the Umno split of 1987-1988, an article by Zainuddin made the claim that "Umno" was above such squabbles, that the party would endure because it was without ideology, purely dedicated to "democracy".[41] Likewise, by March 1998 even constructive criticism ceased, due to pressures from the ongoing water shortage in Kuala Lumpur, combined with both the haze and the impact of the Asian financial crisis. Instead, there were articles such as the lead on 3 March, about a government scheme to tackle graduate unemployment, which was wholly congratulatory.[42]

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[37] "*Umno Hidup Semula* (Umno Lives Again)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 17 February 1988, 8.
[38] Other articles that illustrate this include "*Pengajaran Dari Kes Umno* (Lessons from Umno's Case)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 6 February 1988, 8; Abdullah Hamid, "*BN Mampu Kekalkan Arau* (BN Able to Hold on to Arau) " *Utusan Malaysia*, 3 July 1998, 6.
[39] This important research on the lack of independence includes Anuar, "Defining Democratic Discourses: The Mainstream Press."; Wong Kok Keong, "News Objectivity and Its Relevance in This Age of Internet and Social Media: The Case of Malaysia," in *IBSSS: The 3rd Global Symposium on Social Sciences* (Bali 2015); Chang, "*Media Massa Dan Hegemoni*."
[40] A. Rashid Ahmad, "*Menghijaukan Malaysia* (Greening Malaysia)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 1 March 1997, 6. See also "*Kios Elektronik Pemangkin Produktiviti* (Electronic Kiosks Increase Productivity)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 12 March 1997, 6; "*Mendisiplinkan Pengguna Jalan Raya* (Discipline Road Users)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 1 March 1995, 6.
[41] Zainuddin Maidin, "*Umno Tetap Tidak Berorientasikan Ideologi* (Umno Still Not Ideological)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 2 January 1988, 8.
[42] "*Langkah Menangani Pengangguran Siswazah* (Steps to Handle Graduate Unemployment)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 3 March 1998, 6. See also "*Bank Negara Terlambat*? (Is Bank Negara Too Late?)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 10 March 1998, 6; Salleh Buang, "*Apabila Bank Anda 'Sakit'* (When Your Bank Is 'Sick')," *Utusan Malaysia*, 10 March 1998, 6.

This section has illustrated the relationship between the coverage of the leader page and the political tensions and concerns of the Umno. Building upon and extending the literature on the role of politics in the Malaysian newsroom, I have looked at how these tensions were manifest in ways that go beyond issues of censorship and direct control. I have demonstrated how the tensions and "the Malay" in the leader page were directly linked to the Umno's rhetoric and aims. Below I go on to contrast the writing of and by women in the leader page, and how their position here also mirrors their marginal position within Umno politics.

Writing women in* Utusan's *leader page

Like "the Chinese" discussed earlier, women were largely absent from the leader page, as both writers and readers. The assumption of a male readership was sometimes explicit, for example, when readers were exhorted to care for their wives and children, but more often it was implied. The first example of this tendency from the corpus occurred on the second day examined (2 October 1987), in an article about the religious imperative to work.[43] Here, the writer Wan Izzuddin Wan Sulaiman stated that work has been important throughout history, noting that the Qu'ran calls upon all those who are able to, to work productively. The assumptions underlying these assertions are clearly gendered, in that women's ability to work in Malaysia in particular and in Islamic societies more broadly has been contested, as amply shown by Leila Ahmad's classic 1992 investigation into women in Muslim (primarily Arabic) societies.[44] In the *Utusan* article, women's experience of work was not mentioned because the underlying assumption was that the audience was male. This elision was consistent over the corpus, and affirms Liesbet van Zoonen's assertion that journalism has been "historically and philosophically rooted in universalist concepts of gendered human nature and society resulting in the restraints of a male public sphere and a female private sphere".[45] Likewise, in these pages, few articles explicitly dealt with women. In terms of Umno policy, this absence may have been explicable at the start of the period, but as I illustrated in the Introduction, women became increasingly important to

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[43] Wan Izzuddin Wan Sulaiman, "*Falsafah Dan Etika Kerja Menurut Islam* (Islamic Philosophy and Ethics of Work)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 2 October 1987, 8.

[44] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). See also Yusuf Sidani, "Women, Work, and Islam in Arab Societies," *Women in Management Review* 20, no. 7 (2005), 498-512. The experience of women in Southeast Asia has been different from that of those in the Middle East and North Africa, but this literature clearly illustrates that Muslim women's experience of work has not been accorded the same prominence as that given to Muslim men. In a Malaysian context, the tension was explored, for example, in Aihwa Ong, *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987).

[45] Liesbet van Zoonen, "A Tyranny of Intimacy? Women, Feminity and Television News," in *Communication and Citizenship: Journalism and the Public Sphere in the New Media Age*, ed. Peter Dahlgren and Colin Sparks (London; New York: Routledge, 1991), 217-33.

Umno in their contest for the Malay vote, as the major threat to Umno's vision of Malaysia came from the Islamist party Pas.[46] Nonetheless, this contest did not result in an increase in status of women within Umno, nor did it result in an increase in status for women in the leader page (to the contrary, as I argue below). Rather, by the end of the period the peripheral status of women was confirmed. Importantly, the portrayal of women in these pages differed significantly from the official Umno developmental version, instead it reflected the dynamics between *Wanita* Umno and the malestream party: Women were important as voters and supporters of men, but not as full political citizens.

Women appeared more prominently in the leader pages between 1987-1992 than afterwards, and appeared during these years as individuals endowed with equal faculties with and rights as men. Further, there was an underlying assumption that both Islam and development favoured women's empowerment, and that Pas was rooted in the past in its attitude towards women. The cartoon below illustrates this "backward" Islamist vision: There had been a recent *fatwa* or opinion issued that women should not play netball, as they dressed inappropriately (in tracksuit pants and t-shirts). In the cartoon the netball players dress in the traditional *baju kurung*, but use this to hide the ball from their opponents. This "backwardness" was regularly countered in articles published on Friday (the day of prayer in the Muslim week). For example, in an article by Mohamed A Rahman, the position of women in Islam was examined from a starting point of equality: "Islam views women through a gaze of justice and equality. There is no difference between men and women."[47] He argued that differences were contextual *(dari situasi yang berlainan*), rather than essential. The article was the most powerful assertion of the rights of women in all columns analysed, across both papers. Likewise, the newspaper published columns by academic Faisal Othman from 1989 to 1992.[48] He attempted to moderate the influence of the *dakwah* movement, such as in his March 1989 story, which argued that the *ulama* (religious scholars) should lead by looking at the values rather than the style of the Prophet Muhammad's life.[49] Throughout March 1989, all the articles on religion in the leader page were directed at the inculcation of critical thinking. For example, on 24 March 1989, Faisal argued that the job of the *ulama* was to assess current conditions and to try and uphold the moral order, rather than

[46] Discussed, for example, in Foley, "The Challenge of Contemporary Muslim Women Activists in Malaysia," 94.
[47] "*Islam memandang kepada wanita dengan pandangan adil dan saksama. Tidak ada perbezaan antara lelaki dan wanita*." Mohamed A. Rahman, "*Kemuliaan Wanita Dalam Islam* (Women's Honour in Islam)," *Utusan Malaysia* 1989, 8.
[48] He had one article in 1993, but not his own column.
[49] Faisal Othman, "*Keserasian Islam Di Sebarang Tempat Dan Masa* (Islam's Uniformity through Space and Time)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 3 March 1989, 8.

to force a return to the past.[50] The decision to give Faisal a regular space indicates an editorial commitment to a critical model of Islam. Within this column, Faisal addressed women's position in Islam twice. On 2 March 1990, he cited the seclusion of women as a misapplied norm, giving a detailed critique of those claiming Islamic civilisation required women be returned to seclusion.[51] On 13 March 1992, he argued in favour of female leadership.[52] Both articles mirror arguments made by Islamic feminists, such as Sisters In Islam, who have argued that Islam does not bar women from leadership positions.[53]

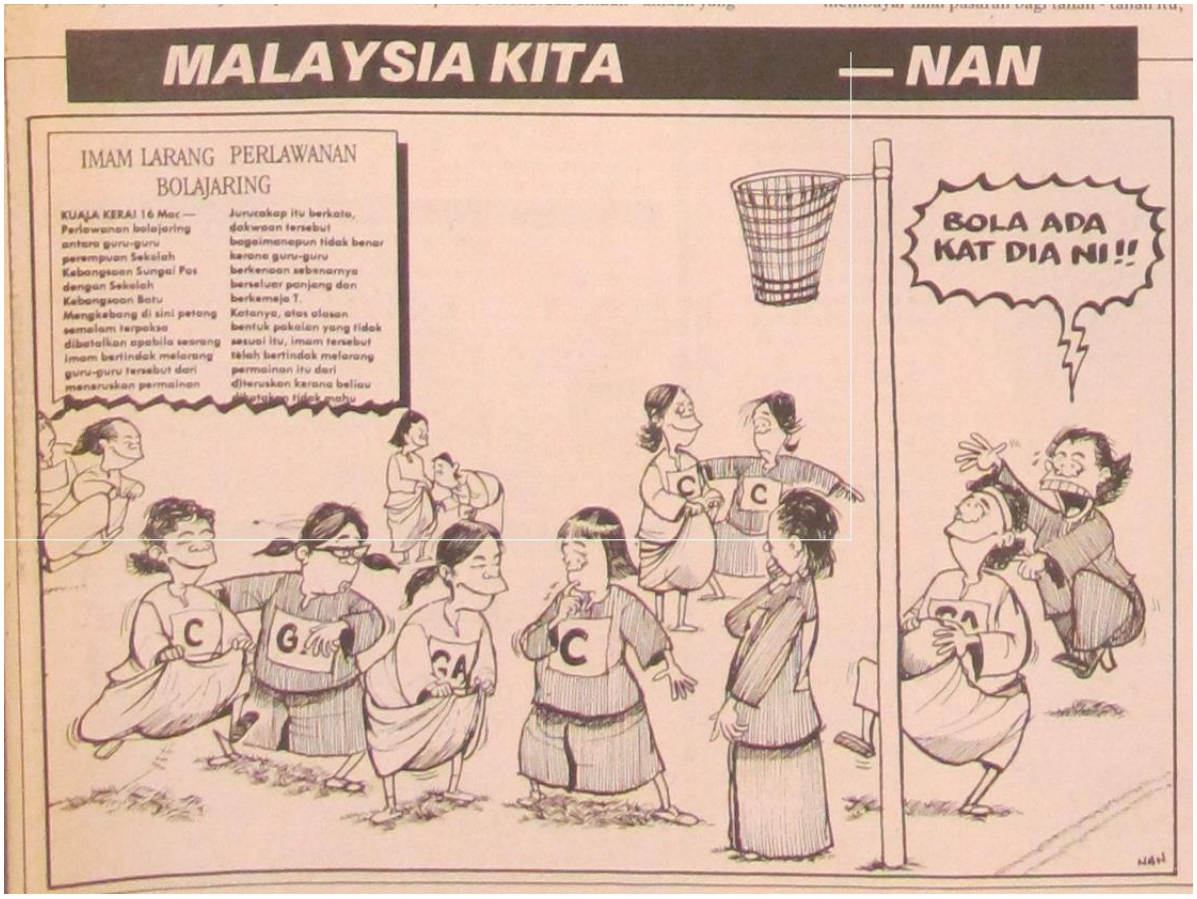

Figure 4-1: A fatwa (inset) had been issued saying women must wear traditional dresses to play netball. In the image, the girls use the voluminous skirts to hide the ball from the opposing team.[54]

[50] Faisal Othman, "*Berapa Permasalahan Pokok Dalam Teori Politik Islam* (Some Relevant Problems in Islamic Political Theory)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 24 March 1989, 8.
[51] Faisal Othman, "*Contoh-Contoh Aplikasi Normatif Islam Dalam Sejarah* (Historical Examples of the Application of Normative Islam)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 2 March 1990, 6.
[52] Faisal Othman, "*Pertentangan Fikiran 2 Ulama Ulung Azhar* (Opposing Thoughts of 2 Foremost Ulama from Azhar)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 13 March 1992, 6.
[53] See, for example, "Are Women and Men Equal before Allah?," ed. Sisters In Islam (Petaling Jaya: SIS Forum, 1991), 3.
[54] 'Nan', "*Malaysia Kita* (Our Malaysia)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 19 March 1988, 8.

Until 1993, there were two female columnists on the leader page, Rosnah Majid and Adibah Amin. In her interviews, Rosnah said being a woman had no impact on her work, echoing work by feminist media scholar Karen Ross, showing that female British journalists often denied having a gendered experience of the newsroom.[55] Despite this assertion, Rosnah's columns regularly mention women, directly or indirectly. In an article on the rise of Japan post-World War II, for instance, she discussed culture and particularly make up.[56] In other articles, she discussed female political leaders, without (always) talking about them as women leaders, but as leaders who happened to be female.[57] Women therefore appeared more regularly on the leader page because female writers were not blind to the presence of women, a trend also noted by journalism scholar Evelyn Trapp Goodrick, in reference to US leader writers.[58] The presence of women in Rosnah's columns contrasted with their absence in most articles on the leader page, even when a story involved practices or work dominated by women. For example, a contemporary article was written on handicrafts that only mentioned a single woman, in citation. It did not discuss the gendered nature of the work, and both craftspeople interviewed were male.[59]

After 1993, the malestream editorial's "Malay woman" shifted, mirroring political and editorial changes. The roles women could be expected to play became more constrained. These changes followed Johan Jaafar's 1992 promotion to editor-in-chief from outside the daily paper. Despite subsequent denials, the promotion was seen as resulting from his close relationship with the Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim (1993-1998), as noted in Chapter Three.[60] Anwar in turn had been at the forefront of the *dakwah* movements in Malaysia prior to his co-option by Umno in 1982, which facilitated the Islamisation of the party and its image.[61] Nonetheless, during this period, Umno was cultivating an image as being the guardian of women's rights, in comparison with Pas.[62] Anwar was seen as comparatively progressive on women's status in Islam, but in his book *Asian Renaissance*,

[55] Ross, "Women at Work." See also Jenkins and Finneman, "Gender Trouble in the Workplace"; Tracy Lucht, "Job Satisfaction and Gender," *Journalism Practice* 10, no. 3 (2016), 405-23.
[56] Rosnah Majid, "*Erti Sebuah Kemajuan* (The Meaning of Development)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 17 December 1987, 8.
[57] Rosnah Majid, "*Politik Wanita Asia* (Asian Women's Politics)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 19 November 1987, 8; Rosnah Majid, "*Rebut Kuasa Kerana Dendam* (Coups for Vengeance)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 10 December 1987, 9; Rosnah Majid, "*Politik: Seni Segala Kemungkinan* (Politics: The Art of the Possible)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 31 December 1987, 8.
[58] Evelyn Trapp Goodrick, "Editorial Writers' Approaches to Selected Women's Issues," *Newspaper Research Journal* 12, no. 3 (1991), 20-31.
[59] Fairos Nazri, "*Kraftangan Malaysia Tak Dapat Penuhi Permintaan Pasaran* (Malaysian Handicrafts Can't Fulfil Market Demand)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 24 December 1987, 9.
[60] Gomez, "Politics of the Media Business," 477-80.
[61] Anwar, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia*, 11-14.
[62] See, e.g., Ting, "Gender Discourse in Malay Politics," 75.

Anwar mentioned women only twice, though in the context of equality.[63] Likewise, women were, at least rhetorically, positioned as equals by Umno, but in practice they were largely absent from Umno's policies, and in this regard, developments on the leader page showed this sidelining. On the much rarer occasions when women were mentioned on the leader page after 1992, their role was primarily as wives and mothers. The positioning of women in terms of family mirrors what anthropologist Maila Stivens discusses in terms of Islamic values, which she charts from 1996 on: Women were expected to be managers of family and, often, work, but that the former took precedence.[64] Yet, simultaneously, the Umno was positioning itself as progressive, through proposed initiatives such as reserving 30 percent of positions for women (discussed in the next chapter), the National Policy on Women and the establishment in 2001 of the Ministry of Women's Affairs. The ambiguity in these policies allowed the narrative in the leader page to largely ignore women, and stray from the rhetoric of the developmental woman, promoting a domestic vision of the Malay-Muslim woman, closer to the reality of the position of women within the Umno.

The clearest indicator of the change in tone, style and content of the discussion of women was in the leader columns on religion. These changes were part of a shift to a less critical and open interpretation of Islam, a vision of Islam more rooted in fear and a sense of Muslims as victims. These changes began with the introduction of a weekly column, which became *Minda Islam*, by the Institute of Islamic Understanding (*Ikim*).[65] The earliest column in the corpus came from 5 March 1993, by Ismail Ibrahim and advocated tolerance between Muslims and non-Muslims.[66] Ismail exhorted Muslims to recognise their religion as one of strength and beauty. Yet, while he said Islam espouses tolerance, he added "this does not mean Islam and its adherents can put up with anything or be oppressed or treated cruelly".[67] Ironically, this sentence courted the defensiveness Ismail criticised; the article likewise indicated a shift from critical Islam to defensive, inward-looking Islam. The shift did not occur instantaneously, but from this date onwards more articles of this type began to appear.[68] The themes of being under attack, of the need to return to the "true" Islam and the need for unity began appearing

[63] Anwar Ibrahim, *The Asian Renaissance* (Singapore; Kuala Lumpur: Times Books International, 1996), 50.
[64] Stivens, "'Family Values' and Islamic Revival."
[65] The name of the column changed repeatedly, but used the same logo and similar content.
[66] Ismail Ibrahim, "*Konsep Toleransi Islam* (The Islamic Concept of Tolerance)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 5 March 1993, 6.
[67] "*hal ini tidak bererti bahawa Islam dan umatnya boleh diperlakukan apa sahaja atau ditindas dan dizalimi."*
[68] Thus, the next Minda Islam column was Faisal Othman, "*Patuhilah Hukum Alam* (Obey the Natural Law)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 12 March 1993, 8.

regularly.[69] These themes echoed the increasing influence of the *dakwah* movements;[70] the global feeling of persecution which increased following the First Gulf War;[71] and discourse within Umno itself.[72] Women appeared substantively once in the *Minda Islam* columns analysed. On 14 March 1997, an article on the obligations of wives and husbands began with the ways a wife could commit treachery (*derhaka*) against her husband, for example, by leaving the house without her husband's permission – though it conceded there were schools of thought arguing it would be permissible in extreme circumstances.[73] It also discussed the responsibilities a husband has to his wife – to not treat her roughly or wear a sour expression. The imbalance between the wife's and the husband's rights and responsibilities was solved in the last line: Islam guaranteed that love between the spouses would lead to a happy home.[74] This article went beyond framing the women as a wife and mother, and indicated that she should hold a subordinate position within society and the home. This position is difficult to reconcile with official Umno rhetoric, though it mirrors the relationship between *Wanita* Umno and the main party. Elsewhere in the leader page, women's rights also made way for women's responsibilities. For example, on 3 March 1997, an article by Abdullah Ahmad examined the importance of politicians' wives.[75] The article begins with Khadijah, first wife of the Prophet Muhammad. She was addressed as the wife who gives the Prophet space to think and presents him with children, rather than as a successful businesswoman.[76] Likewise, a year later, an academic addressed the various forms of feminism, beginning with a focus on "lesbian feminism".[77] While the article addressed substantive demands, in the context of a deep official homophobia, the writer minimised the struggle for equality through this presentation, and by implying that the majority of

[69] See e.g. Mahayudin Yahaya, "*Mencari Iktibar Daripada Keruntuhan* (Finding Lessons in Collapse)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 11 March 1994, 6; Ismail Ibrahim, "*Berhari Raya Penuh Takwa* (Celebrate with Piety)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 3 March 1995, 6; Khairul Azhar Idris, "*Psikologi Dalam Al-Quran* (Psychology in the Qu'ran)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 19 January 1996, 7. These are longstanding themes: Hendrik M. J. Maier, *We Are Playing Relatives: A Survey of Malay Writing* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004), 241-6; Roff, *Studies on Islam and Society in Southeast Asia*, 167.

[70] Various *dakwah* movements called for a return to a true Islam, as examined in the context of the Tablighi Jama'at in Farish A. Noor, "On the Permanent Hajj: The Tablighi Jama'at in South East Asia," *South East Asia Research* 18, no. 4 (2010), 710.

[71] The "persecution complex" was discussed by the then-Education Minister: Anwar Ibrahim, "The Ummah and Tomorrow's World," *Futures* 23, no. 3 (1991), 307.

[72] See, e.g. Mahathir Mohamad, "*Perhimpunan Agung Umno* (Umno General Assembly)," Prime Minister's Office, 6 November 1992.

[73] Abdul Monir Yaacob, "'*Nusus*' *Isteri Dan Suami* (Husband's and Wife's Disobedience)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 14 March 1997, 6.

[74] "*Islam memberi jaminan bahawa rasa kasih sayang dan belas kasihan daripada pihak suami isteri akan dapat melahirkan suasana bahagia dan kemesraan dalam rumah tangga*."

[75] Abdullah Ahmad, "*Kekuatan Pengaruh Wanita* (The Strength of Women's Influence) " *Utusan Malaysia*, 3 March 1997, 6.

[76] Khadijah's "autonomy and independence" are examined in Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 42.

[77] Makmor Tumin, "*Gerakan Feminisme Di Malaysia* (Feminist Movement in Malaysia)," *Utusan Malaysia* 1998, 6.

demands had been met.[78] Thus, he discussed feminism in the context of the good work being done by the ruling coalition, in line with Umno rhetoric.

Women, however, were generally absent. Thus, for example, of 89 editorials in March 1994, only seven had some connection with women:[79] one section of an article on a young Bosnian girl who wrote a diary from Sarajevo;[80] two articles on a female athlete who committed suicide;[81] and two articles written by a woman, but not mentioning women.[82] Of the final two articles, one dealt primarily with the powers of the Syariah courts;[83] the last was a refutation of the position of the Kelantan Chief Minister in the light of an upcoming by-election.[84] In the articles on the athlete's suicide, gender blindness was clear. She had killed herself due to sexual assault, but recommendations were framed in terms of counselling for "men and women." The gendered dimension of her suicide was elided. Thus, none of these articles dealt with women as gendered, embodied subjects. Further, from 1993-1997, writing women left the leader page. Rosnah, as she made clear in her oral history, came into conflict with Johan Jaafar, while Adibah moved to *BH*. No women wrote on politics or economics, and while academic Fatimah Mohd Arshad had a column on agriculture, the column was only printed until 1994, after which time no women had regular space on these pages. Women's absence from the leader page has been noted in other contexts, for example, by Dustin Harp et al in relation to the U.S..[85] Interestingly, however, U.S. female leader writers were moving into the realms of politics and economics, framed as part of the steady march of progress of women in the media. In contrast, in *Utusan,* women moved out of these areas, contradicting assumptions of continually progressive advances by women. This dearth of women writers helped to accelerate the women's disappearance from the leader page.

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[78] Likewise, Mahathir talks of (Western) feminism as an "insane struggle": Mohamad, *The Challenge*, 70. On homophobia in Malaysia, see Wong Yuenmei, "Islam, Sexuality, and the Marginal Positioning of Pengkids and Their Girlfriends in Malaysia," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 16, no. 4 (2012), 435-48; Pang Khee Teik, "Sexual Citizenship in Conflict," *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Malaysia* (2014), 361-74.

[79] Numerically, this proportion is similar to the earlier period.

[80] Johan Jaafar, "*Diari Kanak-Kanak Bosnia* (Bosnian Children's Diary)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 6 March 1994, 10.

[81] "*Khidmat Nasihat Untuk Atlit* (Counselling Service for Athletes)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 12 March 1994, 6; "*Alahai, Rabia* (Alas, Rabia)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 13 March 1994, 10.

[82] Fatimah Mohd. Arshad, "*Peranan Saham Sektor Korporat Pertanian* (Role of the Corporate Sector and Shares in Agriculture)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 14 March 1994, 6; Fatimah Mohd. Arshad, "*Hala Cara Baru Pembangunan Luar Bandar* (New Direction for Rural Development)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 28 March 1994, 6.

[83] "*Kuasa Mahkamah Syariah* (Powers of the Syariah Court)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 17 March 1994, 6.

[84] Wan Ramli Wan Muhamad, "*Nik Aziz Perlu Tegas* (Nik Aziz Needs to Be Firm)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 24 March 1994, 6.

[85] Dustin Harp, Ingrid Bachmann, and Jaime Loke, "Where Are the Women? The Presence of Female Columnists in U.S. Opinion Pages," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 91, no. 2 (2014), 289-307.

The Umno script dominated how men wrote about men in the leader page, throughout this period. Women, however, were written differently, even within these pages, and largely to the detriment of their autonomy. A change in editorial direction in 1993 resulted in women being increasingly seen as outside the realm of politics and even explicitly subordinate to men. This apolitical construction of a women's realm, while not endorsed by the official Umno rhetoric, corresponded with the marginal position of women inside the Umno. In the next section, I compare and contrast how women were portrayed in advice columns in both the women's and religion pages, echoing in some ways the changes over time of women in the leader pages.

Comparing the construction of women in advice columns in the women's and religion pages

Advice columns are a rich site for analysis. Through presenting solutions to readers' problems, reporters, agony aunts or specialists help build acceptable norms and set out the rationale for engaging in behaviour. Thus, Angela McRobbie's seminal 1981 study of the "Cathy and Claire" advice columns in teen-magazine *Jackie* showed how girls were schooled that appearance was important, but primarily for attracting boys, rather than personal fulfilment.[86] In *Utusan* there are three major advice columns I address. The first, which was published in the *Keluarga* pages until 1992, is the *Dr Ong* medical advice column. The second, published from 1992 for the rest of this period is Dr Amran Kasimin's *Soal Jawab Agama (SJA)*, published on the religion pages. The last is *Kak Nor & Masalah Anda*, by women's desk reporter Normala Hamzah, which focused on relationship advice for younger women, published on the women's pages from March 1998. Thus, I follow a broadly chronological trajectory here, but contrast the concurrent presentation of women in *SJA* and *Kak Nor*.

Dr Ong provided a platform for discussing women's sexual health and sexuality. The column was in the format of two or three unconnected letters from readers, each with a short piece of medical advice.[87] Almost all the questions are related to sexual health. Communication scholar David Gudelunas has discussed how the advice columns in US papers opened up space to discuss taboo

[86] McRobbie, "Just Like a *Jackie* Story." See also David Gudelunas, *Confidential to America: Newspaper Advice Columns and Sexual Education* (New Brunswick; London: Transaction Publishers, 2008), 1-5; Shissler, "'If You Ask Me'"; Dawn Currie, "Dear Abby: Advice Pages as a Site for the Operation of Power," *Feminist Theory* 2, no. 3 (2001), 259-81.
[87] Dr Ong may have been a pseudonym, but the advice given is generally medical in nature.

topics such as masturbation.[88] The *Dr Ong* column fulfilled a similar role. For example, on 5 December 1987, the columnist gave advice on how to get pregnant after two miscarriages; and to a woman who worried that she couldn't get pregnant because semen left her vagina after intercourse.[89] Other common concerns included vaginal discharges and breast size.[90] No other articles, never mind columns, addressed woman's sexual health or sexuality. Letters were sent to the women's desk, so the power of selection rested with the women's page journalists. That the focus on sexual health, however, was reader-driven shows a potential disconnect between the concerns of readers and the issues addressed in other spaces in the women's pages.[91]

Dr Ong, along with a medical column by Nur Faizah Abdullah, was replaced by a new column *Islamic Medical (Council) Counselling* in 1993. Initially it continued to have a question and answer section, but the letters in this section seem staged – the letters always referred to the problem discussed by the main column, and never related to sexual health. Thus, for example, on 2 March 1993, the lead article was about fever.[92] The letters, on the same page, were *Mengapa leher saya bengkak dan gatal (Why is my neck swollen and itchy)* and *Demam kuning boleh membawa penyakit serius (Yellow fever can bring serious illnesses*).[93] Both these letters referenced fevers that could be linked to life-threatening illnesses. There was no perceptible link between the columns and religion, but those writing appeared to be Malay-identifying Muslim men. There was here a shift of authority from secular sources, that is "Dr Ong", to sources defined as being religious and predominantly male. Authority and control moved out of the hands of the reporters working on the women's desk to the external Islamic Medical Council, and, likewise, the taboo subjects of women's sexual health and sexuality disappeared from the women's page and the newspaper. They were to be reframed in terms of religion and morality.

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[88] Gudelunas, "Talking Taboo."
[89] "'*Apa Puncanya Kandungan Saya Sering Keguguran*?' ('Why Do My Pregnancies Often Miscarry?')," *Utusan Malaysia*, 5 December 1987, 13.
[90] E.g. "*Penyakit Keputihan Biasanya Berpunca Dari Jangkitan* (White Vaginal Discharge Is Usually Due to Infection)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 16 January 1988, 14; "'*Mengapa Bila Saya* Diet *Buah Dada Saya Turut Kecil*?' ('Why Do My Breasts Shrink When I Diet?')," *Utusan Malaysia*, 27 February 1988, 14.
[91] This is not, of course, confined to the Malaysian media. See Macharia, Dermot, and Ndangam, "Who Makes the News?," 28-38; Alexandra Bogren, "Biologically Responsible Mothers and Girls Who 'Act Like Men'," *Feminist Media Studies* 11, no. 2 (2010), 197-213; Kim Allen et al., "Welfare Queens, Thrifty Housewives, and Do-It-All Mums," *Feminist Media Studies* 15, no. 6 (2015), 9907-25.
[92] Ishak Masu'd, "*Demam Tanda Penyakit* (Fever Is a Sign of Illness)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 2 March 1993, 19.
[93] Although *demam kuning* is sometimes translated as jaundice, the context here makes yellow fever, the literal translation of the words, more likely.

The next column, *SJA,* was published in the religion page of *Utusan*. While there has been debate about the role of religion in the media, particularly in the US, religious advice columns have received very little scholarly attention, perhaps indicating that such columns do not exist in major Western newspapers.[94] The religion page featured in both the Malay-language newspapers examined, though English-language newspapers lacked an analogous page or column.[95] The presence of the religion page further indicates the assumption of a homogenously Muslim readership. In 1987, *Utusan* published one tabloid-sized religion page weekly, focused on textual analysis of the Qu'ran or other historical Islamic documents. The unattributed columns appear syndicated and ran as a series, with each series being repeated over time.[96] The religion page was absent from the paper in both March 1990 and March 1991. When it returned in 1992, *SJA* was introduced, a major innovation. This advice column comprised a lengthy answer to (usually) one short letter. As the column developed, some concerns about sexuality were redirected here from the women's pages, with an increasing number of women writing for advice.[97] The advice was often analytical rather than practical. In the first column analysed, on 1 March 1992, the reader asked why Allah does not always answer prayers.[98] The response began with a quote from *surah Al-Mukmin* (The Believer), in which Allah says He will answer prayers. The article went on to say that as human beings we need to trust in Allah, and that prayer is a duty. Following five paragraphs of exposition, there was a second quote, from *surah al-Baqarah* (The Cow), which was again followed by exposition. This style continued throughout the article, including quotes from the *hadiths* (sayings/ practices of the Prophet). Amran Kasimin did not directly answer the reader's question, and gave no practical solutions. While the style of quotation and exposition became less formal over time, both played a significant part in this column. The introduction of this column was important in various ways. It made female readers visible. For example, on 20 March 1994, Amran answered four letters about menstruation, though only two from female readers.[99] He said that the first time a girl's period comes, she must not fast or pray for 15 days; on the question of why menstrual fluids had varying colours, he answered with reference to various *mazhabs* (schools of thought). Prior

[94] On religion and the press see, e.g., Rick Clifton Moore, "Religion and Topoi in the News: An Analysis of the 'Unsecular Media' Hypothesis," *Journal of Media and Religion* 2, no. 1 (2003), 49-64; Mark Silk, *Unsecular Media: Making News of Religion in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Judith Buddenbaum, "Covering Religion," in *Journalism across Cultures*, ed. Fritz Cropp, Cynthia Frisby, and Dean Mills (Ames: Iowa State Press, 2003), 159-84; Daniel A. Stout and Judith M. Buddenbaum, "Media, Religion, and 'Framing'," *Journal of Media and Religion* 2, no. 1 (2003), 1-3.
[95] Towards the end of the period, *The Star* published a column by Ikim, but the column was presented as informing non-Muslims about the religion.
[96] E.g. "*Siapakah Malaikat*? (Who Are the Angels?)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 13 March 1988, 16.
[97] The initial dominance of male letter-writers could have been due to the selection of letters by the columnist.
[98] The column was consistently a Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia academic, and its name changed slightly across the period examined. Amran Kasimin, "*Allah Tidak Pernah Menginkari Janji2nya* (Allah Cannot Forsake His Promises)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 1 March 1992, 14.
[99] Amran Kasimin, "*Menentukan Sembahyang Dan Puasa Dalam Tempoh Haid* (Determining Prayer and Fasting During Menstruation)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 20 March 1994, 16.

to this column, the assumption of a male readership on the religion page (signified by repeated use of *Muslimin* [Muslim male]) had been absolute.[100] This visibility should not, however, be overstated. For example, in March 1993, a pregnant woman wrote in, yet the answer was addressed as if to her husband.[101] In this instance, the female reader was erased. Thus, what this column achieved was the possibility of asserting a female presence among the readers, although there seemed to be resistance by the writer to this presence.[102] These examples also illustrate how medical concerns had been displaced into the religious column.[103] Unlike in *Dr Ong,* however, both male and female readers addressed their medical concerns to *SJA.* On 26 May 1996, for example, a male letter-writer was concerned about chest pains and laboured breathing.[104] While Amran advised the man to see a doctor, the response concerned itself primarily with textual precedents for this predicament. Likewise, the column touched on issues such as madness (1 March 1998) and insomnia (14 April 1996).[105] While there were occasional letters (as the examples above show) related to sexual health, these did not dominate *SJA* the way they did *Dr Ong*. What the above examples show, however, is how medical concerns had become moral concerns.

In *SJA*, Malay-Muslim women were constructed as being supplementary to men, sometimes in extremely disconcerting ways. The worst instances consisted of two stories about girls (one 12 at the time, the other 13) who had been or were being raped or sexually molested by male family members.[106] Rather than advising them to seek help or counselling, or to report the matter to the police, Amran warned the girls that they had committed *zina* (adultery) and that they needed to show repentance.[107] Both these stories occurred in 1998, around the same time as the *pesta seks* panic explored in the next chapter and in line with an increasing concern with the moral impact of economic development, known colloquially as *gejala sosial* (social ills). On relations within marriage, Amran

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[100] E.g. "*Sentiasalah Mengingati Allah*," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 18 October 1987, 19.
[101] Amran Kasimin, "*Masalah Isteri Mengandung Termuntah Semasa Berpuasa* (Problem of Pregnant Wife Vomiting During the Fasting Month)," *Mingguan Malaysia* 1993, 14.
[102] Given that the writer is an academic based outside the newspaper, I assume that this bias comes from him, rather than from the editors within the paper.
[103] Contextualised as part of an ongoing movement of Islamic identity formation in Shamsul, "Identity Construction, Nation Formation and Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia," 216-9.
[104] Amran Kasimin, "*Mengatasi Dada Berdebar* (Addressing Chest Pains)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 26 May 1996, 24.
[105] Amran Kasimin, "*Pembalasan Dosa Ujian Allah* (Retaliation for the Sin of Testing Allah)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 1 March 1998, 22; Amran Kasimin, "*Gangguan Rohani, Jasmani* (Spiritual, Physical Disturbance)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 14 April 1996, 24.
[106] Amran Kasimin, "*Awas Perangkap Zina* (Beware Being Caught for Zina/ Premarital Sex)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 22 March 1998, 22; Amran Kasimin, "*Kesan Perbuatan Zina* (The Effects of Zina/ Premarital Sex)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 19 April 1998, 22.
[107] For a discussion of zina and the breadth of interpretations, see Linda Rae Bennett, "Zina and the Enigma of Sex Education for Indonesian Muslim Youth," *Sex Education* 7, no. 4 (2007), 375-80.

repeatedly wrote of the family as headed by the husband. One letter dealt with a violent husband, on 19 July 1998, after the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act 1994.[108] In this article, Amran asserted that husbands would never be violent unless provoked, laying the blame firmly with the wife. Again, he did not advise the correspondent to seek legal redress. Male "inability" to control their lust was also addressed, with marriage seen as the answer (e.g. 29 March and 24 May 1998, though in the latter self-control was also advised).[109] In contrast, there were two columns (12 July and 9 August 1998) where he advised unmarried women against extreme self-sacrifice, and he generally (see 14 and 21 June 1998) counselled against polygyny.[110] Prior to marriage, therefore, there appeared to be room for female agency, at least in the decision of whether to marry (a particular person) or not. Amran urged women to be consistently on guard against men who might force them or trick them into committing *zina*, (eg 5 July 1998), because then they would be "*rosak*" (ruined).[111] Where a man committed *zina*, however, primarily through extra-marital affairs, Amran counselled repentence, and reminded the reader that Allah is forgiving.[112] Thus, there was a harsh double standard in the (human) judgement of women who transgressed prescribed sexual standards. This double standard, and women as the moral guardians of men, has been addressed by Virginia Hooker in relation to Malay literature in the run-up to Independence;[113] and widely addressed in the literature on Western portrayals of women.[114] What is stark in these examples, however, is the extent to which even young girls who had been raped by family members were still held responsible for male lust, despite legislation to the contrary.

The relation of the "Malay-Muslim woman" in the religion page to the Umno and to the leader page women was therefore complex. In some ways, "she" transgressed the boundaries of Umno rhetoric,

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[108] Amran Kasimin, "*Balas Dendam Membinasa Diri* (Revenge Will Only Destroy You)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 19 July 1998, 22.
[109] Amran Kasimin, "*Jangan Kunci Nafsu* (Don't Lock up Lust)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 29 March 1998, 24; Amran Kasimin, "*Gunakan Akal Untuk Kebaikan* (Use Intelligence for Good)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 24 May 1998, 22.
[110] Amran Kasimin, "*Jangan Perhambakan Diri* (Don't Enslave Yourself)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 12 July 1998, 22; Amran Kasimin, "*Kawal Diri Dengan Ibadah* (Protect Yourself with Faith)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 9 August 1998, 26; Amran Kasimin, "*Berpoligami Tidak Semudah Bernikah* (Being Poligamous Isn't as Easy a Wedding)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 14 June 1998, 26; Amran Kasimin, "*Ranjau Orang Berpoligami* (Traps for Polygamists)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 21 June 1998, 33.
[111] Amran Kasimin, "*Bertaubat Jalan Kesempurnaan* (Repent and Move to Perfection)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 5 July 1998, 22.
[112] Amran Kasimin, "*Taubat Yang Diterima Allah* (Repentance Is Accepted by Allah)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 17 May 1998, 22.
[113] Virginia Matheson Hooker, *Writing a New Society: Social Change through the Novel in Malay*, Southeast Asia Publications Series (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999), 304-6.
[114] E.g. Josefin Bernhardsson and Alexandra Bogren, "Drink Sluts, Brats and Immigrants as Others," *Feminist Media Studies* 12, no. 1 (2011), 1-16; Jennifer Musial, "From 'Madonna' to 'Whore': Sexuality, Pregnancy, and Popular Culture," *Sexualities* 17, no. 4 (2014), 394-411.

in that equality of women was clearly sidelined. Yet, there were important similarities. First, the defining feature of women in all three arenas was her absence, more so on the religion page than elsewhere. Second, women were defined by their relations with men, and these relations of dependence were seen as unproblematic: The possibility of men failing to economically provide, to abuse or to rape women (except when women's morality failed) was excluded across the column, mirroring the leader page. Lastly, my findings confirm the literature which posits that in the aftermath of the crack-down on other forms of dissent, such as civil society and left-wing political activism, religion remained the area of discourse where dissent was least policed.[115] In this context, it is important to notice the limits to this transgression, in the complete absence of social justice issues in *SJA*. There was opportunity for these to be raised, for example in discussions on what constitutes a good Muslim, but the main traits emphasised were prayer, fasting, study and modesty, what Michael Peletz refers to as the superficial aspects of religion.[116]

The final advice column analysed here is *Kak Nor*. This column was primarily directed at younger women, who wrote in about relationship problems, principally romantic relationships but occasionally friendship and familial relations, similar to the columns analysed by Angela Robbie in *Jackie* magazine.[117] While the letters were about the same length as those in *SJA*, the replies were much shorter, comprising two or three paragraphs. The agony aunt, Normala Hamzah framed women as guides or instructors to their husbands and boyfriends, at least in matters of religion. On 26 March 1998, for example, the letter-writer wanted to know what to do, as her fiancé did not know how to pray.[118] Normala advised the reader to accept him, provide an example, and that change would come. The construction of women as the moral guardians of men has been longstanding in Malay literature, for example as explored by Virginia Hooker in relation to the 1920s novel *Faridah Hanum*.[119] Thus, women here were not portrayed as temptresses, but as morally superior to men, contrasting with the portrayal in *SJA* above. One *Kak Nor* article dealt with sexual assault. On 2 April 1998, a woman wrote

[115] For example, James V. Jesudason, "Statist Democracy and the Limits to Civil Society in Malaysia," *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 33, no. 3 (1995): 351-53.
[116] E.g. Amran Kasimin, "*Jangan Rosakkan Aidilfitri Dengan Perbuatan Mungkar* (Don't Ruin Aidilfitri with Dishonorable Activities)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 28 March 1993, 14. See also Peletz, "'Ordinary Muslims' and Muslim Resurgents," 241. Note, however, that Saba Mahmood points to how outward aspects of faith are adopted to influence values, so what appears superficial may not be. Saba Mahmood, "Agency, Performativity and the Feminist Subject," in *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, ed. Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 238-43.
[117] McRobbie, "Just Like a *Jackie* Story."
[118] Normala Hamzah, "*Bakal Suami Tidak Tahu Sembahyang* (Husband-to-Be Does Not Know How to Pray)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 26 March 1998, 32.
[119] Virginia Matheson Hooker, "Transmission through Practical Example: Women and Islam in 1920s Malay Fiction," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 67, no. 2 (1994), 93-118.

that she was scared of her wedding night due to abuse when she was 11.[120] While (in contrast to *SJA*), Normala advised her that she was still "pure" (*suci*), she was not advised to report it to the police, nor was the abuse framed as criminal.[121] Thus, there were some similarities between the *Kak Nor* column and the *SJA*, but the differences were more evident. First, most published letter writers were female, and Normala presented a feminine perspective to these problems. Women and women's writing dominated the column. Second, while women were seen as moral guardians, it was not in reference to control of male lust, but in terms of an assumed moral superiority. The one male predator evident in the column was firmly blamed for abuse, rather than the abused child. In this, I am not arguing that Normala was adopting a feminist perspective, but rather that she adopted a nurturing persona, caring for "women, *ibu tunggal* (single mothers)… *anak-anak yatim* (orphans)" a persona evident in her oral history.[122] Thus, in comparison to the portrayal of women in both the religion and leader pages, the woman portrayed here was (morally) independent. Though her life revolved around relationships, she could direct and influence those relationships.

Taking the different advice columns as a whole, there was a shift over time, from women addressed as comparatively independent, sexual beings in *Dr Ong* to being male dependants, yet with responsibility for the control of male lust and religious behaviour in *SJA*, echoing the changes noted above in relation to the leader page. It is perhaps unsurprising, given its focus, that the women's relationships with men were the primary focus in *Kak Nor*, nor that women's careers and work-life balance were rarely discussed. Women in *Kak Nor,* however, were more autonomous and, despite being discussed in relation to men, were less dependent upon men (the reverse was more true). The Malay-Muslim woman in the advice columns of the women's pages thus was neither the female *Melayu Baru* seen elsewhere in the women's pages, nor the dependent wife and mother of the leader and religion pages: "She" was independent of the stereotypes of both the Umno and the malestream editorial hierarchy. These findings show to a limited extent how the women's page writers, when faced with similar material (the letters) gave a more rounded, and more egalitarian, portrayal of women than seen in the religion pages. I expand upon this finding in the next section.

[120] Normala Hamzah, "*Takut Hadapi Malam Pengantin* (Scared of Wedding Night)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 2 April 1998, 29.
[121] The Malaysian Child Protection Act was only passed in 2001, and even under the provisions of this Act, only medical professionals, family and child care professionals have an obligation to report statutory rape (Articles 27, 28 and 29).
[122] Normala, interview.

The women's pages of *Utusan*

I now turn to analysis of the women's pages of *Utusan*. The main questions addressed are who was the Malay woman on the women's pages, as seen by her primary concerns, interests and relationship to Islam; how did she evolve over the course of the period examined; and what was her relationship to the *Melayu Baru* on the leader pages. These themes are developed to show how the women's pages were perceived by journalists and editors as an apolitical space; how they escaped party dominance; and how the ideal woman was derived from sources other than the Umno developmentalist model. It looks first at one of the only columns in the women's pages that extended throughout this period, *Di celah-celah kehidupan* (Life's nooks and crannies), by prominent first generation journalist Maimunah Yusof. It goes on to examine two other prominent and complementary tropes in these pages, the entrepreneur and the deserving poor.

Di celah-celah kehidupan

Maimunah was the sole author of *DCCK* throughout this period, and her attachment to the column was such that after leaving the paper she continued the column online. A typical column began by referring to the previous week's column, reflecting on reader responses, and how that led to this week's column, or alerting the reader to the introduction of a new topic. The column was then given over to the voice of the female narrator.[123] The narrator then told her (rarely his) story, involving troubles between herself and her husband, though sometimes with in-laws, other wives or other members of her own family.[124] The story was always confined to the domestic realm and ended with sage words from the columnist. Maimunah rarely tried to solve the problem, in the manner of an agony aunt, rather she helped guide the reader to lessons that could be learned.[125] Aside from these lessons, the choice of story to be published was apparently guided both by the sensationalist and potential pedagogical factors.

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[123] E.g. Maimunah Yusof, "*'Wahai Suami, Apa Lebihnya Pondan Dari Seorang Isteri?*' ('Oh Husband, What More Has a Transvestive Got Than a Wife?')," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 11 October 1987, 27.
[124] E.g. Maimunah Yusof, "*Bila Ibu Main Cinta, Matapun Buta, Anak-Anak Hura-Hara* (When Mother Plays with Love, Eyes are Blind, Children Are in Anarchy)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 1 November 1987, 27. Example of a male respondent: Maimunah Yusof, "*'Mulanya Saya Cuma Simpati, Tapi Akhirnya Jatuh Hati...'* ('To Begin I Just Wanted Sympathy, but Finally Fell in Love...')," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 25 March 1987, 27.
[125] E.g. Maimunah Yusof, "*'Bila Gadis-Gadis Remaja Diamuk Cinta Monyet...'* ('When Young Girls Are Crazy for Monkeys...')," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 11 January 1988, 25.

The *DCCK* Malay woman was defined through marriage. She had or wanted a husband. All further characteristics were secondary. Throughout the period analysed, a total of 86 stories, only seven were not directly related to marriage and negotiating relationships within marriage (in-laws, first or second wives, husbands etc). One of the over-riding concerns was with male fidelity, especially in the context of a man's ability to take multiple wives.[126] Maimunah's stated concern was to ensure that wives were not held responsible for this infidelity, that is, it was not due to their lack of attention to either their husband or their appearance, and to a large extent this was demonstrated.[127] Developments associated with polygyny in the 1990s in Malaysia mirrored those later seen in Indonesia post-Suharto (1998 onwards), as explored by Suzanne Brenner, in that the debate shifted from the terrain of equality and women's rights, to men's religiously defined right to marry more than one wife.[128] In Malaysia, where states have been responsible for Islamic laws, a progressive Islamic Family Law passed for the Federal Territory in 1984 was supposed to be applied uniformly across the Federation. With the growth of the Islamic bureaucracy and the attempts of the state to co-opt the *dakwah* movements in the mid- to late-80s and 1990s, religious scholars successfully campaigned against some of the more progressive provisions, making polygyny easier.[129] Feminist Zainah Anwar argued that Islam was used to justify laws which meant that Muslim women enjoyed fewer protections in marriage than non-Muslim Malaysian women, because once a debate had been framed in religious terms, it became "untouchable".[130] Statistics, however, show that the number of polygynous marriages registered between 1990 and 2004 peaked in the early 1990s, and fell after 1995.[131] In this context, *DCCK* related both the hardship of having a husband who took a second wife and of being a second wife.[132] A large number of articles focused on how men deceived women; the difficulties of getting a divorce after discovering the existence of a second (or third) wife; and the financial strains that polygyny placed on

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[126] E.g. Maimunah Yusof, "*'Wahai Isteri Ingatlah, Bercerai Tidak Semudah Dilafazkan...'* ('Oh Wives Remember, Divorce Isn't as Easy as Its Pronouncement...')," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 28 February 1988, 23.
[127] Maimunah, interview.
[128] Suzanne Brenner, "Holy Matrimony? The Print Politics of Polygamy in Indonesia," ed. Andrew N. Weintraub, *Islam and popular culture in Indonesia and Malaysia* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2011), 266-94. See also Nina Nurmila, "Negotiating Polygamy in Indonesia: Between Islamic Discourse and Women's Lived Experiences," in *Indonesian Islam in a New Era: How Women Negotiate Their Muslim Identities*, ed. Susan Blackburn, Bianca J. Smith, and Siti Syamsiyatun (Clayton: Monash University Press, 2008), 23-45.
[129] Zainah Anwar, "Advocacy for Reform in Islamic Family Law: The Experience of Sisters in Islam," in *The Islamic Marriage Contract: Case Studies in Islamic Family Law*, ed. Asifa Quraishi and Frank E. Vogel (Cambridge: Islamic Legal Studies Program, Harvard Law School, 2008), 275-84.
[130] Anwar, "Islamisation and Its Impact," *Warning Signs of Fundamentalism* (2004), 73-4.
[131] Not all polygynous marriages in this period were recorded. This comment is based on official statistics compiled by Sisters in Islam from the various State records: Between 1995 and 2004, around 1.4 percent of Muslim marriages were polygynous. Jac sm Kee and Sisters in Islam, n.d.
[132] E.g. Maimunah Yusof, "*'Apa Salah Saya, Suami Lebihkan Anak Tiri Dari Anak-Anak Sendiri...?'* ('What's Wrong with Me, My Husband Prefers His Step-Child to His Own Children...?')," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 13 March 1988, 22; Maimunah Yusof, "*Hari Ini Sayang Esok Melayang* (Today Love, Tomorrow Adrift)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 8 March 1992, 12.

women, particularly in their role as mothers.[133] These articles cultivated female solidarity. The column generally (though not always) reminded readers that the second wife was not at fault, that she may not have known that her husband was married.[134] Thus, for example, in 1998, a young woman who had not realised her fiancé, now husband, was married, appealed for understanding.[135] Occasionally men were given space to explain why they took a second wife, but not only were these rare, they were framed as providing balance to the female voices privileged in this column.[136] The female solidarity cultivated was, however, among wives, not as part of a movement for change. Further, by focusing on polygyny, a fundamental insecurity was cultivated at the heart of the husband-wife relationship which, in these columns, defined the Malay-Muslim woman. This insecurity and the contractual (rather than emotional) nature of marriage is also seen in Patricia Sloane's *Islam, modernity, and entrepreneurship among the Malays*.[137] She notes the tension among her respondents between economic dependence on their husbands and their desire for both economic and social freedom, perceived as being possible through either divorce or polygyny: "only a naïve and innocent girl would dream of romance and love from a man; a practical woman with entrepreneurial ambition dreams of charity dinners and high-level business contacts."[138] Likewise, the answer offered to this marital insecurity in *DCCK* was financial independence, securing a future in case of abandonment or divorce.[139] Stories such as *Nasib seorang isteri setelah sakit* (*The fate of a wife when ill*) were common, though this story indicates an extreme case.[140] Intan (a pseudonym) related how her husband insisted she visit *bomoh*s (magicians/ healers) when doctors discovered that she had breast cancer. When she

[133] For further discussions on polygyny see Raihanah Abdullah, Silmi Abdullah, and Nahid Ferdousi, "The Fragile Status of a Muslim Wife," *Journal of Family History* 40, no. 2 (2015), 135-52; Nurmila, "Negotiating Polygamy in Indonesia," 23-43.

[134] E.g. Maimunah Yusof, "*'Bukan Semua Isteri Kedua Bahagia Malah Ada Yang Hidup Menderita...'* ('Not All Second Wives Are Happy, Some Live in Suffering...')," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 7 February 1988, *Pancaindera* 25.

[135] Maimunah Yusof, "*'Saya Bermadu Ditipu Lelaki Mengaku Duda'* ('I Married a Liar Who Said He Was Single')," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 12 April 1998, *Pancaindera* 15. See also Maimunah Yusof, "*'Jangan Cari Pasal Bila Suami Cuba-Cuba Buat Hal...'* ('Don't Find Fault for What Your Husband Does...')," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 21 February 1988, *Pancaindera* 25; Maimunah Yusof, "*Hantar Anak Ke Kampung Kalau Nak Kahwin* (Send the Kids Away If You Want to Get Married)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 10 March 1996, *Pancaindera* 15.

[136] E.g. Maimunah Yusof, "*Kami Bercerai Kerana Isteri Kaki Hutang* (We Divorced Because Wife Is a Debtor)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 5 March 1995, *Pancaindera* 15; Maimunah Yusof, "*Jangan Salahkan Suami Kalau Anda Dimadu* (Don't Blame the Husband If He Takes Another Wife)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 22 March 1992, 12.

[137] It should be noted that marriage is discussed differently in the advice columns, particularly for single women, cf Sloane, *Entrepreneurship among the Malays*, 32. See also Makiko Hanami, "Gender in a Rural Malay Community: Between *Adat* and Islam" (University of California Los Angeles, 2002), 82-4.

[138] Sloane, *Entrepreneurship among the Malays*, 41.

[139] Muslim women faced difficulties receiving maintenance or alimony, see Mehrun Siraj, "Women and the Law: Significant Developments in Malaysia," *Law & Society Review* 28, no. 3 (1994): 568-9.

[140] Maimunah Yusof, "*Nasib Seorang Isteri Setelah Sakit* (The Fate of a Wife When Ill)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 2 March 1997, *Pancaindera* 15. See also Yusof, "*'Bila Gadis-Gadis Remaja Diamuk Cinta Monyet...'*."; Yusof, "*'Apa Salah Saya, Suami Lebihkan Anak Tiri Dari Anak-Anak Sendiri...?'*."; Maimunah Yusof, "*'Suami Saya Isytihar Perang Kalau Minta Wang'* ('My Husband Declares War When I Ask for Money')," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 10 March 1991, 12.

finally had a mastectomy, and chemotherapy, he took another wife, abandoning her and their four children, refusing to pay her medical bills. Intan recalled her shame when she had to ask her birth family for assistance, the unspoken assumption being that her care and the care of the children was the duty of the husband. When she went to the Syariah courts, their response was that her husband could not be faulted, as she was unable to meet his (sexual) needs. In her parting words, Maimunah stressed the importance of financial independence and careful saving in good times, because women are not healthy forever, implying that men were unreliable and institutions were inadequate.

Rarely were structural factors such as institutional bias against women, government policy or lack of legal safeguards examined in the *DCCK* articles.[141] The implementation of Syariah law, rather than the law itself, came under scrutiny, both in Maimunah's framing and in the stories themselves. The focus on implementation echoes the perceived role of the media by Mahathir, that is, that the media can criticise the government, but not in a "*sikap adversary*" (adversarial style).[142] Further, Mahathir was known to distrust the legal system and, for instance, described the courts as containing weaknesses that needed to be rectified.[143] Thus, in Intan's story above, she bemoaned the lack of fairness in a system that allowed a husband to abandon his wife of 14 years when she became ill, rather than the system itself. Likewise, in April 1998, the column ran a series of stories on women who were tricked into marrying in Thailand, to prevent the first wife from being notified of the marriage.[144] They were then unable to get a divorce, because the husbands refused to register the marriages locally. The women were unable to remarry, abandoned by their husbands. In this instance, a legal solution was provided on 3 May 1998.[145] A woman related how she could register her marriage, accompanied by a cartoon of a Syariah court official threatening to arrest a man for not registering the marriage and a mouse representing Maimunah saying, "That's the right thing to do!" in the corner. Thus, Maimunah

[141] Government policy on pengkids (tomboys/ masculine lesbians) came under scrutiny in one article. As it was not sustained over several issues or weeks, I have not included it here.
[142] Mahathir Mohamad, "*Majlis Penyampaian Hadiah Kewartawanan Malaysia Anjuran Institut Akhbar Malaysia* (Ceremony to award the Malaysian Press Institute's Malaysian Journalism Awards)," Prime Minister's Office, 22 February 1990.
[143] E.g. "*Majlis Perasmian Persidangan Majlis Hakim-Hakim Mahkamah Persekutuan/ Mahkamah Rayuan/ Mahkamah Tinggi* (Official Opening of the Federal, Appeal and High Court Judges' Meeting)," Prime Minister's Office, 15 March 1996, ¶14.
[144] Yusof, "'*Saya Bermadu Ditipu Lelaki Mengaku Duda*'"; Maimunah Yusof, "*Perceraian Jadi Masalah Bila Nikah Di Sempadan* (Divorce a Problem When Married Overseas)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 19 April 1998, *Pancaindera* 15; Maimunah Yusof, "*Gara-Gara Nikah Sempadan Isteri Dilarang Hamil* (Pregnancy Forbidden Because Married Overseas)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 26 April 1998, *Pancaindera* 15.
[145] Maimunah Yusof, "*Isteri Boleh Daftarkan Sendiri Perkahwinan* (Wives Can Register Marriage Themselves)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 3 May 1998, *Pancaindera* 19.

was not advocating for institutional reform, but that the institutions conduct themselves in accordance with the (just) laws that were in place.

Figure 4-2: Cartoon showing Syariah official helping a wife, the mouse in the corner representing Maimunah Yusof.

The Malay Muslim woman in the *DCCK* column was constructed on a neoliberal model. As outlined in Chapter One, the neoliberal subject was marked by responsibilization; was not expected to value political autonomy; transformed political into personal problems; and became a "consumer-citizen".[146] The woman narrated by *DCCK* had to take responsibility for her own financial, emotional and physical security, relying on neither the state nor those around her.[147] She constantly faced uncertainty, especially in the core relationship by which she was defined, her marriage.[148] In as far as she had expectations from the state, these were in terms of non-interference and defence of property rights, guaranteeing the right to divorce and maintenance. Female solidarity was limited to the marital family, and religion framed in institutional, rather than personal, terms. In many ways, "she" was the female *Melayu Baru*, but throughout the column the focus was on how difficult it was for women to embody these principles. Rather than emancipatory, the female *Melayu Baru* in *DCCK* revealed how responsibilization created additional burdens for Malay-Muslim women. There was little change over time in the Malay-identifying woman in this section. Rather, what changed were external circumstances, such as the power of the Syariah courts over women's lives, and thus the

[146] Brown, "American Nightmare."
[147] See also the experiences of middle- to upper-class female entrepreneurs in Sloane, *Entrepreneurship among the Malays*, 28-42.
[148] To *layan suami* (serve your husband) is proposed as a goal for middle-class women in Sylva Frisk, *Submitting to God: Women and Islam in Urban Malaysia* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 94. Other ethnographic evidence contradicts this, perhaps due to a difference in class, e.g. Hanami, "Gender in a Rural Malay Community: Between *Adat* and Islam," 127-69.

recommended strategies for dealing with these changes. While not passive, the Malay-Muslim woman was urged to engage in business to ensure her financial security in the absence of a social welfare system that could act as a safety net. There was no reference to a party political agenda neither were the political tensions apparent in the male *Melayu Baru* evident. Rather, Maimunah appears constrained by political events, but without reference to party politics or to political solutions to the problems in women's lives. These women were being let down by the policies on Islamic family values, with both self-reliance and individualised faith posited as solutions.

The entrepreneur and the deserving poor in the* Wanita *pages[149]

In line with the exhortations to independence in *DCCK,* the most common article in the *Wanita* pages was the story of the hard-working entrepreneur and later the enterprising businesswoman, as shown in the table below. Most of the articles focusing on women as workers were published after 1997, indicating shifts in how readers were framed by the paper, from primarily subsistence entrepreneurs to emerging middle class. As noted in Chapter Three, respondents said their aim was to provide positive examples for women to follow, and these stories exemplified this.[150] Articles discussed work-life balance, sexual harassment at the office or the difficulties of finding reliable domestic help.[151] In this section, I examine the ways in which Malay women were constructed as being engaged in business, what types of business were portrayed as being acceptable or ideal, the contradictions in the portrayal of Malay businesswomen and other limiting factors to potential success. The aim is to uncover how far the Umno *Melayu Baru* woman was present on these pages; and to what extent there were tensions outside this narrative.

Main topic	**No. of articles**	**Dates published (in Oct. 87)**
Entrepreneurs	14	4(x2), 5(x2), 6, 8, 15, 23(x2), 25, 26, 27, 29, 30
Disability	9	1, 8, 10, 14, 16, 18(x2), 20, 22
Careers/ Working women	8	3, 7, 19(x2), 25(x3), 31
Beauty/ Fashion	6	2, 6, 10, 11, 13, 24

[149] From my interviews, and from the bylines, the same desk was responsible for both the Keluarga pages, which generally appear Monday to Saturday and the Wanita pages. The reporters were referred to in the interviews as working on the women's pages or the women's desk, which was reflected in the content of these pages which generally assumes a female audience. I have therefore conflated these two sections.

[150] E.g Maimunah, interviewed Ampang, 23 February; Zaharani, interviewed Kuala Lumpur, 27 February; and Normala, interviewed Bangi, 8 April 2014.

[151] E.g. Zainab Mohd Ali, "*Benarkah Wanita Berjaya Di Bidang Pekerjaan Gagal Dalam Rumahtangga?* (Do Women Who Succeed at Work Really Fail at Home?)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 9 November 1987, 13; Norliza Abd. Rahman and Nor Aziah Jaafar, "*Gangguan Seksual: Mangsa Mengalami Tekanan Kerja* (Sexual Harassment: Victims Experience Work Stress)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 15 June 1998, 28; Nor Aziah Jaafar, "*Pembantu Rumah: Rujuk Masalah Kepada Ejen* (Home Help: Give Problems to Agents)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 27 July 1998, 28.

Culture/ Heritage	5	3, 12, 13, 26, 27
Health	5	3, 10, 17, 24, 31
Welfare	5	3, 10, 12, 17, 31
Wanita Umno	4	2, 7, 9, 31
Food/ Home	4	9, 10, 12, 31
Social ills	2	5, 28
Advice	2	11, 25
Discrimination	1	11
Rape	1	14
Parenting	1	20
Other Umno events	1	28

Table 4-2: Breakdown of Wanita *articles for October 1987*

In the *Wanita* section of *Utusan*, the neoliberal self was apparent throughout the period examined, as the dominance of these articles on entrepreneurship illustrates. For example, on 4 October 1987, Zaharani Asran examined the life of an entrepreneurial widow.[152] This was a story of self-reliance, from someone who was not "*orang senang*" (someone of means), but who sacrificed for her children's education. The angle was consistent with Zaharani's interview, where she said she was "ambitious" for "her ladies".[153] Another article on the same page complemented this perspective, about a women's self-help group in Kelantan, women working together without help from the state.[154] These are two of many examples.[155] In both these stories, women took responsibility for their own happiness, which was equated with material success, and the potentially political problems of child-care, economic and social disadvantage were transformed into personal challenges overcome by dedication, hard work and opportunity, with only the latter provided by the government.[156] These articles give a positive spin on the neoliberal woman, similar in content, though different in emphasis, to the "thrifty housewives" of the British media, analysed by Kim Allen et al, who are contrasted with welfare dependents, demonised as being "shirkers" who refuse to work and use motherhood as an excuse for hand-outs.[157] Work, in both *Utusan* and in Allen et al, plays the role of a universal panacea, applicable in almost any situation. Business was not, however, the focus of women's lives. The women's pages placed family first. In the first story above, the mother was forced to work, because of being single. It was not a

[152] Zaharani Asran, "*Janda Berniaga Bawa Bahagia* (For Widow, Working Brings Happiness)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 4 October 1987, *Pancaindera* 23.
[153] Zaharani, interview.
[154] "Wartawan kita (Our journalists)", "*Perkumpulan Perempuan Kelantan Tetap Bergiat Cergas* (Kelantan Women's Group Still Active)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 4 October 1987, *Pancaindera* 23.
[155] E.g. Ahmad Waidi, "*Dari Lidi Kelapa Sawit Habibah Usahakan Jadi Pasu2 Bunga Nan Indah* (From Oil Palm Fronds, Habibah Makes Beautiful Fake Flowers)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 7 November 1987, 17; Nur Faizah Abdullah, "*Rahsia Suri Rumah Jadi Peniaga Sejuta Ringgit* (Housewife Who Became a Millionaire Businesswoman's Secret)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 3 March 1989, *Pancaindera* 25; Sholina Osman, "*PWPK Bantu Wanita Pekebun Kecil Tambah Pendapatan* (PWPK Helps Women Smallholders Increase Income)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 13 March 1992, 9.
[156] In *The Malay Dilemma*, Mahathir even suggests that women provide a model for male (Malay) workers to emulate, Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma*, 109-10.
[157] Allen et al., "Welfare Queens, Thrifty Housewives, and Do-It-All Mums."

choice and the happiness referred to in the title (*bahagia*) comes from economic self-sufficiency, rather than any fulfilment in work itself. Likewise, on the previous day Rosie Hashim wrote about a young female model.[158] In this story, work was a hobby that happened to bring in money. This theme was often reiterated:[159] In March 1990, a fortnightly column, *Hobi Wanita* (Women's hobbies) was published.[160] These were not hobbies in the sense of a pursuit carried out for leisure, but about making handicrafts for sale, echoing Maria Mies' 1982 study of the lace-makers of Narsapur, cited in feminist scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty's 2003 book *Feminism without borders*.[161] In a story from 2 March 1998, Nor Aziah Jaafar claimed the women were supplementing their husbands' income and that they conducted business in their spare time. Yet, the interviewees worked 12 hour days, often while looking after children.[162] Nor Aziah's portrayal of this work as being done in spare time meant women could be economically productive while managing, and taking primary responsibility for, a family. Likewise, in February 1996, a housewife, Fauziah Zakaria made peanut fritters (*tempeyek*) in her spare time (*masa lapang*), but moved onto selling them full-time, employing five people.[163] Her "hobby" was thus responsible for the work of others. The framing was again that business was done by housewives (*suri rumah*) to increase household income (*menambahkan pendapatan keluarga*), rather than being important in itself. The business was primarily a lucrative hobby. The work done by women, as in Mies' research, was often the basis for the male economy, but was classified as leisure-time work, and thus grounded in sexual identity and devalued, yet, it was simultaneously crafted as being necessary for women's economic well-being. What was sidelined in both Mies' work and the women in *Utusan* was women's ability to see themselves as workers, as people who found empowerment and enjoyment in work, unless the work itself was trivialized as a hobby.

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[158] Rosie Hashim, "*Kerana Minat Aneka Fesyen Shahrizan Menjadi Peragawati* (Because of Interest, Shahrizan Becomes a Model)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 3 October 1987, 14.
[159] Rosie Hashim, "*Hobinya Mahal Tapi Hasilnya Menguntungkan* (Her Hobby Is Expensive, but Has Profitable Results)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 7 November 1987, 12.
[160] E.g. Rosie Hashim, "*Kayu Hanyut Pun Berharga Kalau Disolek* (Driftwood Can Be Valuable If Beautified)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 9 March 1990, *Pancaindera* 6.
[161] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2003), 149-52.
[162] Nor Aziah Jaafar, "*Peniaga Wanita… Membantu Tingkatkan Ekonomi Keluarga* (Women Entrepreneurs… Help Raise the Family's Income)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 2 March 1998, 27.
[163] Maznah Mohamed, *"Tempeyek Punca Rezeki Fauziah* (Fritters Fauziah's Source of Income)" *Utusan Malaysia*, 8 February 1996, 26.

Another prominent theme was work as a nationalist endeavour, which intensified following the Asian financial crisis in 1997.[164] Throughout his (first) time in office, Mahathir framed individual success as important for the nation. In a speech to the Malaysian Business Council in 1991, for example, his key point was the need for business and government to work together to make Malaysia "a fully developed country by the Year 2020."[165] Andrew Kim Eungi and Park Gil-sung explored a similar, conscious strategy of using nationalism to inculcate a work ethic in South Korea during the 1960s.[166] The articles in the *Wanita* pages echoed this official framing. An example of this inculcation of nationalism can be seen in an article on the need for continuing education, published on 19 March 1998.[167] The writer says this education was not for personal gain or enrichment, but for the country and for the children. The article, particularly read alongside the articles cited above, exemplifies subsuming the importance of women's activities under the rubric of the nation and family.[168] All these articles focused on self-as-enterprise and self-management.[169] The women profiled benefited from government courses, training opportunities and/ or start-up capital, but the focus of the articles was on their determination and hard-work in service of the family and the nation.

Further, during the Asian financial crisis, there were numerous stories of women succeeding despite the downturn, even taking advantage of the downturn – in sharp contrast to the leader page, where the West was continually blamed for the country's ills.[170] On a national level, there may have been structural problems due to outside interference, but on an individual level, most hardship could be overcome through hard work. The most extreme example was Zanifah Md. Nor's story of 23 August 1998.[171] While other stories, particularly those in March 1997, mentioned overcoming the hardship of

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[164] From before the crisis: "*Perkumpulan Perempuan Kelantan Tetap Bergiat Cergas*"; Zainab Mohd Ali, "*Anak Melayu Pertama Usaha Projek Ukir Piring Bunga Malaysia* (First Malay to Sell Flower-Carved Plates)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 2 January 1988, 12.

[165] Mahathir Mohamad, "Malaysian Business Council - the Way Forward," Prime Minister's Office, 28 February 1991.

[166] Andrew Eungi Kim and Park Gil-sung, "Nationalism, Confucianism, Work Ethic and Industrialization in South Korea," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 33, no. 1 (2003), 37-49.

[167] Salehuddin Mat Rasad, "*Mendidik: Wanita Perlu Lebih Proaktif* (Educating: Women Need to Be More Pro-Active)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 19 March 1998, 30.

[168] See also Maznah Mohamed, "*Wanita Patut Digalak Ternak Itik* (Women Should Be Encouraged to Farm Ducks)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 9 March 1997, *Pancaindera* 16; Norliza Abd. Rahman, "*Rohana: Usahawan Tembikar Berjaya* (Rohana: Successful Pottery Entrepreneur)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 13 March 1998, 32; "*Saudah Fesyen Dapat Sambutan* (Saudah Fashion Welcomed)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 8 April 1998, 29.

[169] This reflects the neoliberal persona explored in McNay, "Self as Enterprise," 60-5.

[170] E.g. Ruhaini Abd. Kadir, "*Semangat Kental Bawa Kejayaan Zarina* (Tough Spirit Brings Zarina Success)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 1 March 1998, *Pancaindera* 21; Maznah Abd. Halim, "*Rozita: Kegawatan Ekonomi Satu Cabaran* (Rozita: The Economic Crisis Is a Challenge)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 28 March 1998, 29; Zanifah Md Nor, "*Saimah: Percaya Pakaian Borong Semakin Popular* (Saimah: Believes Warehouse Clothing Shops Are Increasingly Popular)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 12 July 1998, 21.

[171] Zanifah Md Nor, "*Kemelesetan Ekonomi Bawa Berkat Pada Norijah* (Economic Crisis Brings Blessings for Norijah)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 23 August 1998, 21.

an economic crisis, this article portrayed the crisis as "bringing blessings". While the article was published during the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s, it referred to the recession of the late 1980s, when both Norijah Dumoon and her husband lost their jobs. This predicament gave Norijah the impetus to start up her own business, a thriving cake shop in Melaka. While other stories in the women's section referred to the disproportionate impact that the economic crisis had on women, at least in terms of lay-offs, the framing of crisis here was as a difficulty that could be overcome with hard-work, ingenuity and some sacrifice.[172]

This elision of social context extended to the problem of multiple responsibilities. Not once in the articles analysed was it suggested that child-care or housework were responsibilities shared between spouses. On the contrary, an April 1998 article noted with concern a man who not only did housework, but did it without anger.[173] The wife was portrayed as spoiled and selfish. She should have engaged in proper time-management, the proposed solution for most of the problems women faced.[174] Similar patrolling of gendered work by both state and corporate actors has been researched in other Malaysian contexts, such as Aihwa Ong's classic monograph on female factory workers.[175] Yet, this gendered burden was recognised as having a social cost.[176] For example, on 15 December 1987, Zainab Mohd Ali reported on a conference where the only speaker covered blamed working women for social ills.[177] While women were urged to work, in the interests of both the family and the nation, they were blamed, implicitly or explicitly, when things went wrong.[178] The only answer offered to this was consistent with the advice offered by *dakwah* groups – a turn to religion, and women staying at home, which in turn went against the exhortation to women to work.[179] This response also elided the

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[172] For stories on lay-offs, see Zaharani Asran, "*Kegawatan Ekonomi: Jangan Buang Pekerja Wanita* (Economic Crisis: Don't Fire Women Workers)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 27 April 1998, 28; Rosniza Mohamad, "*Hawa Tangani Masalah Pekerja Wanita* (Hawa to Handle Women Workers' Problems)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 23 May 1998, 30.
[173] Normala Hamzah, "*Suami Jadi Hamba Isteri Eksekutif* (Husband Becomes Executive Wife's Slave)," *Mingguan Malaysia*, 19 April 1998, *Pancaindera* 16.
[174] See Nor Aziah Jaafar, "*Pengurusan Masa* (Time Management)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 10 April 1998, 25; "*Kualiti Masa Penting Dalam Kehidupan Wanita* (Quality Time Is Important in Women's Lives)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 13 April 1998, 28; Rosniza Mohamad, "*Khairah: Rumah Tangga Dan Kerjaya Sama Seiring* (Khairah: Home and Career Should Be Balanced)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 28 April 1998, 27.
[175] Stivens, "'Family Values' and Islamic Revival," 357-8; Aihwa Ong, "The Production of Possession: Spirits and the Multinational Corporation in Malaysia," *American Ethnologist* 15, no. 1 (1988), 28-42.
[176] See also Maria S. Floro and Anant Pichetpongsa, "Gender, Work Intensity, and Well-Being of Thai Home-Based Workers," *Feminist Economics* 16, no. 3 (2010), 5-44; Martha MacDonald, Shelley Phipps, and Lynn Lethbridge, "Taking Its Toll: The Influence of Paid and Unpaid Work on Women's Well-Being," *Feminist Economics* 11, no. 1 (2005), 63-94.
[177] Zainab Mohd Ali, "*Tanpa Sifat Kasih Sayang Jadi Punca Renggangnya Hubungan Kekeluargaan* (Lack of Affection Is the Source of Broken Families)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 15 December 1987, 12.
[178] E.g. Nur Faizah Abdullah, "*Anak Jadi Penagih Dadah Cerminkan Kelemahan Didikan Ibu Bapa* (Child Becoming a Drug Addict Shows Weaknesses in Parents' Education)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 12 March 1990, 14.
[179] See Frith, "Constructing Malay Muslim Womanhood in Malaysia," 11-13. Other articles include Mahmood Ahmad, "*Jangan Biar Orang Tua Sendirian* (Don't Leave Old People Alone)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 11 March

necessity for financial security examined in the *DCCK* columns. While I return to this paradox in Chapter Six, the contrast with the developmental model posited by Umno is stark: Development caused the problems faced by women, it did not provide solutions. Yet, neither did the bureaucratic policies on Islamic family values. Solutions were only found outside Umno discourses, though this inconsistency was never explicitly stated nor acknowledged.

There were further contradictions between work presented in the career/ entrepreneur articles and work presented in the *DCCK* columns. In *DCCK*, work and income were necessary for a women's security and that of her children, due to divorce and polygyny. In other *Wanita* articles, however, women's income was supplementary to the husband's income. In either case, a woman worked for the family or the nation, rarely was a woman's work important and fulfilling, contrasting with the experiences of the journalists.[180] There is a difference here with how the male *Melayu Baru* was framed in the leader pages, and with how women were portrayed, particularly in terms of the relationship with government. Writers did not exhort women to be hard-working and independent, much like the *BH* reader in the next chapter, they were assumed to already be neoliberal entrepreneurs, yet entrepreneurs in a way that was problematic due to the social responsibilities that women were expected to carry.

Lastly, the Malay female businesswoman or entrepreneur was "not-Other". First, she was not-male, but significantly she was also not-Chinese. Thus, for example, on 2 May 1998, Rosniza Mohamad contrasts the productive Malay housewife Zalina to both those who just stay at home and to Chinese laundry-owners.[181] The main storyline was that Zalina was special because she was succeeding in a Chinese-dominated field. Here, there was a structural impediment to success, the Chinese domination of laundrettes, echoing Mahathir's fear that "whatever the Malays could do, the Chinese could do better and more cheaply."[182] Yet again, hard work and determination overcame this obstacle. In this context, of the non-Malay Other, communal solidarity was evoked. For example, in the above article,

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1993, 23; Othman Warijo, "*Obes: Masalah Yang Semakin Kronik* (Obesity: An Increasingly Chronic Problem)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 5 March 1996, 25; Nor Aziah Jaafar, "*Masalah Remaja… Pendapat Ibu Bapa Anak Berbeza* (Youth Problems… Parents and Childrens Opinions Differ)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 11 May 1998, 28.

[180] For example, Fariza Saidin (interview, Kuala Lumpur 28 February 2014) continued her writing on entertainment after her retirement: "it was fun being a journalist, even now I am writing my own blog." See https://farizasaidin.blogspot.com.au/

[181] Rosniza Mohamad, "*Zalina… Gigih Mengusahakan Kedia Dobi* (Zalina… Successful Laundry Owner)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 2 May 1998, 29.

[182] Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma*, 25.

readers were encouraged to identify with the challenge Zalina faced, and jointly celebrate her success. As the respondents noted in Chapter Three, success stories were not only related so that readers could emulate them. They also reinforced community boundaries and solidarity. While the entrepreneurs pictured in *Utusan*'s pages were usually portrayed as being self-sufficient, here we see echoes of Patricia Sloane's assertion that Kuala Lumpur was built upon "ramifying networks and alliances, ever-extending social, economic, and communal ties focused on obligation and action; paradoxically, that sociological set of behaviours which often is said to disappear in modern capitalism, but was here an essential definition of Malay modernity".[183] The Malay-identifying woman entrepreneur was part of a community in as far as that community was defined against the non-Malay businesses around her.

The portrayal of women in the women's pages contrasts with the portrayal in the malestream pages in that the women's page woman was more independent, both financially and emotionally. Despite the marginal nature of women's work, reading these articles in conjunction with the *DCCK* and *Kak Nor* columns, a picture emerges of the Malay-Muslim woman as balancing a gendered burden of family and work. Yet, this portrayal was at odds with the image of the Malay-Muslim woman evident in the malestream pages and in Umno's family values rhetoric. Rather, the image resembled the *Melayu Baru*, and drew on the Umno discourse of empowerment. That is, the woman portrayed in the women's pages drew selectively on Umno developmentalist rhetoric, which provided resources upon which women page journalists could draw to help progress a limited vision of empowered women.

Complementing these articles of self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship were stories of the deserving poor (disability and welfare in Table 4-2), the second most common articles in the *Wanita* pages. These focused equally on men and women, and from 1993 onwards often included an address for donations. These articles were important in terms of *Utusan*'s self-image, with an article devoted to them in the 50th anniversary commerative booklet *Di Sebalik Jendela* Utusan *(Behind* Utusan's *window)*.[184] The latter dwells on *Utusan* as a caring institution, but here I examine whether this was the only function these articles played.

[183] Sloane, *Entrepreneurship among the Malays*, 4.
[184] Niza, "*Salam Kemanusiaan Utusan Melayu*," 79-82.

These stories often began with a homily about fate, for example on 1 October 1987, an article by Rosie Hashim began with the inability to argue with fate, that as slaves (*hamba*) of Allah, we can only implore benevolence and hope for His blessings.[185] These homilies were often but not always religious in nature. The deservedness of the poor person or family was then established, always including the reasons behind the hardship (disability, death, carer responsibilities etc.) and extenuating circumstances (lots of children to look after, doctors unable to help etc.). A typical example appeared on 2 February 1996.[186] The story began with a Malay proverb on accumulating misfortune (*sudah jatuh ditimpa tangga*), a more secular version of the allusion to fate. It then described in detail the misfortune, and why they had no savings (because he was a manual day labourer). Writer Abdul Ghani Iman cemented their status as deserving by writing about their adopted daughter, now studying at university. While the daughter received financial aid for her studies, the money was not enough to assist her parents as well. They were asking for temporary assistance, so that the father, at 70, could continue to provide for his family. The article ended with an appeal for funds. Another example, from 4 February 1988, began by stating the assumption that a disability meant a dark future.[187] The article elaborated how Mendek Sakih was grateful (*syukur*) that she could live independently, highlighting individual responsibility for economic well-being, despite not having fully formed legs. Following this came the reference to fate, from Mendek, not the reporter, who said what Allah had given her was a challenge that had to be accepted with gratitude and awareness.[188] The word *syukur*, grateful, was repeated twice in the first paragraph. In contrast to the entrepreneurial articles analysed above, here attention was drawn to the happiness Mendek derived from her work as a banana fritter seller. Women were allowed to enjoy their work if they had to overcome extreme hardship first. The story discussed her married life, her responsibilities, her pride in her children, and ended with an appeal to the local council, as they were planning to close the area where she operated her stall. While there was no direct appeal for funds, her home address was given.

Articles such as these were published at least once a month, often in a regular column, *Di sudut penghidupan (*Lit. *At the corner of livelihood,* or *Life's hardships)*. The role of fate was important: Ill-

[185] Rosie Hashim, "*Lumpuh Kini Mengubah Kehidupan Siti Hatikah* (Paralysis Has Changed Siti Hatikah's Life)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 1 October 1987, 25.
[186] These stories are often of rural Malays, and as a result written by reporters posted outside Kuala Lumpur, often men and rarely members of the core 'women's desk' team, e.g. Abdul Ghani Iman, "*Pasangan Uzur Perlukan Bantuan* (Elderly Couple Need Help)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 2 February 1996, 21.
[187] Jamaludin Iman, "*Cacat Tidak Halang Puan Mendek Bantu Suami Cari Nafkah* (Disability No Barrier to Mrs Mendek Helping Husband Make Ends Meet)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 4 February 1988, 12.
[188] *"pemberian Allah itu suatu cabaran yang wajib diterima dengan penuh syukur and rasa insaf."*

fortune was the primary cause given for poverty or unhappiness.[189] Unlike women in *DCCK*, writers rarely gave a familial, never mind societal, context for the hardships these people, predominantly women, endured. A misfortune - whether from an illness, old age, disability or accident - led hardworking people to poverty. There was nobody to assign responsibility to, and the challenges were all met with serendipity. The people in these columns were deserving of help.[190] They strove to be independent of assistance, but circumstances beyond their control made this difficult or impossible. None of the stories analysed involved people who took drugs, sex workers, and only rarely did stories involve divorcees. No subjects had spent time in prison or engaged in activities that could be seen as morally dubious, and all were shown to have strong faith in God. In contrast to the focus of research on the "deserving" (or undeserving) poor, particularly in the US, such as Michael Katz's historical survey of the ways in which poverty has been conceptualised, the case being made in *Utusan* was not for government welfare or assistance, but for private charity for specific cases.[191] Poverty was not portrayed as a systemic issue, but as an individualised aberration of the general trend of increasing prosperity.

There was thus a clear juxtaposition between the deserving poor, at the mercy of fate against the entrepreneurs and businesswomen that dominated the pages. Poverty (but not success) was the result of particular ill-fortune. Otherwise, poverty could be overcome by individuals taking responsibility for their lives through hard work and making the most of opportunities. There were no structural factors (discrimination, illiteracy) that individuals could assign for their failure to thrive economically. Likewise, in the context of fighting inflation, the Prime Minister's wife, Siti Hasmah Ali, said socio-economic problems could be solved by hard work whether at home or at the office.[192] The position of the women's pages on the deserving poor and entrepreneurship thus reflected the official rhetoric.

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[189] Mohd Sidek Salleh, "*Sedih Berhari Raya Tanpa Suami* (Sad over the Holidays without Their Husband)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 11 March 1994, 23.
[190] E.g. Hapizah Aziz, "*Masa Depan Mas Dan 8 Anak Gelap* (Dark Future for Mas and 8 Children)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 25 March 1994, 21.
[191] Michael B. Katz, *The Undeserving Poor: America's Enduring Confrontation with Poverty*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). See also Robert A Moffitt, "The Deserving Poor, the Family, and the US Welfare System," *Demography* 52, no. 3 (2015), 729-49; Jeffry A Will, "The Dimensions of Poverty: Public Perceptions of the Deserving Poor," *Social Science Research* 22, no. 3 (1993), 312-32.
[192] Siti Hasmah Ali, "Officiating at Puspanita House," Prime Minister's Office, 12 January 1994.

The main focus in these pages was building a neoliberal Malay entrepreneur, who accepted the challenge of the double burden of home-making and business with astute time-management, and who took responsibility for her own success. While child-care was her duty, it should not stand in the way of financial success. In relation to my argument, the women portrayed here are closer to the development woman of Umno than the dependent woman on the leader page. Thus, women journalists can be seen to be constructing the female *Melayu Baru* independently of the malestream hierarchy, and, through the concerns with social ills, at the margins of Umno political rhetoric.

The neoliberal self in the Malay-language papers: Contrasting the leader and women's pages

The above analysis demonstrates that there were tensions present in the construction of the neoliberal self on the leader pages, in terms of the conflict between dependence (upon Umno) and self-reliance. In the women's pages, however, the party was primarily present as a welfare, rather than a political, organisation. *Wanita* Umno organised activities and training sessions. Writers only portrayed it as a political organisation during general elections and the Umno General Assembly. On 7 October 1987, for instance, an article discusses *Wanita* Umno's provision of legal aid for Kelantanese women.[193] This coverage changed during the *Wanita* Umno assembly. During June 1998, there was a series of articles in the women's pages on the assembly.[194] These articles represented the only time that political demands were presented on these pages as work done by *Wanita* Umno. Unlike on the malestream editorial pages, there was no sense of the political process as a dynamic contest, rather it was presented as a service carried out on behalf of the people. An exemplary article argued that, for the family examined, the joint responsibility of being involved in political service through Umno led to family harmony.[195] The main avenue through which *Wanita* Umno figured was in personality profiles. Many interviewees were active in Umno. Thus, the women's page writers presented Umno involvement as a form of social activism and a focus for nationalist sentiment. An example is Rosie Hashim's story of 5 February 1988.[196] While this story was in the mold of the entrepreneurial stories above, it mentioned involvement in *Wanita* Umno as part of the service that these women entrepreneurs undertook. The tension present in the leader page was not present in these pages,

[193] Hatirah Mat Ali, "*Khidmat Nasihat Undang2 Wanita Umno Bergerak Ke Kelantan* (Wanita Umno Legal Clinic Moves to Kelantan)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 7 October 1987, 12.
[194] E.g. Zaharani Asran, "*Wanita Umno Perlu Pertahankan Kekuatan* (Wanita Umno Needs to Maintain Strength)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 16 June 1998, 26. There was also one article on the leader page: Normala Hamzah, "*Zaharah: Kikis Prasangka* (Zaharah: Erasing Prejudice)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 18 June 1998, 8.
[195] Rosniza Mohamad, "*Warisi Tanggungjawab Satukan Keluarga* (Inherited Responsibility Unites Family)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 21 July 1998, 26.
[196] Rosie Hashim, "*Keyakinan Dan Usaha Bawa Kejayaan Jika Teroka Hidup Di Bandar* (Confidence and Business Bring Success in Town)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 5 February 1988, 10.

rather *Wanita* Umno worked towards increasing women's self-reliance through training, while being a recipient of their energies. The question of dependence was reversed from that in the leader page – *Wanita* Umno was aware of its dependence on the energies of those who made up its corps and column inches were devoted to ensuring that this corps was renewed. The focus in these articles was often not on the leaders of Umno, but on activist members.

Likewise, the women's pages did not discuss the fear of the West and the omnipresent concern with the legacy of colonialism (in contrast to *BH*, see Chapter Five). The problems faced in the women's pages were closer to home: the problems of putting food on the table, the aspirations for material advancement. As the analysis above shows, the adversaries presented (usually obliquely) tended to be the (often Chinese) competition, nay-sayers around the would-be entrepreneur or personal qualities – thus the emphasis on the need for hard work and perseverance. Journalists proposed self-reliance, through preferably home-based entrepreneurial activities, as the answer to those problems. Self-reliance, however, was only a partial solution. The stories related in *DCCK* showed that even working women found that their savings were insufficient, that they were deceived into parting with them, or that they had been supplementing their husband's courtship of a second wife. Further, several articles noted how the Asian financial crisis had a disproportionate impact on women, particularly in terms of the proportion of women who lost their jobs. Thus, exhorting women to make good use of their spare time or to engage in entrepreneurial home-based activities, as a strategy to ensure long-term financial security, was at odds with a legal system that had been making it easier for men to take second wives, to divorce their wives, and which continually neglected its duty in enforcing the payment of maintenance.

Conclusion

At the start of the period examined here, until 1992, women appeared in the leader page as human beings endowed with rights, but after this point, the focus shifted to women's responsibilities and relationships in the rare instances when women appeared on these pages. The apolitical framing of women reflected the marginal position within Umno, as a party. These shifts mirrored, in some ways, the increasing presence of tertiary-educated women who had been exposed to the *dakwah* movements in the newsroom, as discussed in the previous chapter. They did not, however, mirror the policy Umno enunciated on women. These policies in turn had an impact on the women's pages. The clearest change over time was the shift away from women as embodied sexual beings, seen in the

move from the discussions in *Dr. Ong* through the Islamic Medical Coucil's column to the presentation of women in *SJA*. This shift in power to discuss women's bodies away from the women's pages shifted how women's bodies were framed from 1992 onwards, that is, through religion.

The women of the women's pages showed more complexity and were more subject to the contradictory pressures generated by the policies of Islamisation and neoliberalism. Further, the articles in the women's pages, read in conjunction with the interviews of Chapter Three, showed how negotiation and shifts in power relations had an impact upon the portrayal of women and the spaces available for them. In the next chapter, these shifts are examined further in the context of the *Berita Harian* newsrooms. Lastly, the solution posited to the contradictions raised between the increasing pressure for women to enter the formal work force and their disproportionate responsibility for familial care and unpaid work was increasing focus on Islam, examined further in Chapter Six. Yet, my analysis also shows how women used Umno rhetoric on equality to justify more progressive roles for women than those in either the religion or leader pages. When women's page writers could anchor their stories in official Umno policy, they could pursue agenda that was at odds with the malestream hierarchy.

This chapter illustrates that the women's pages, and women in general, were seen as apolitical. The difference between the Umno female *Melayu Baru*, and the woman on the leader page was stark. Further, journalists did not narrate women through the lens of party politics, in the same way as the male *Melayu Baru*. Where party was featured in the women's pages, it was depoliticised. The above analysis also shows that although journalists often construsted women in accordance with the female *Melayu Baru*, it was in response to the lived contradictions in their lives, and when the neoliberal development model failed, as seen in the increasing coverage of social ills, the answer was not improved development or state-based solutions, but a turn to Islam. Further, changes in women's lives had a greater influence on this narration than changes in party policy.

Women journalists on the women's pages could "bring women forward", to use Zaharani Asran's phrase.[197] The portrayal of women in *DCCK* did not evolve over time, but it showed consistent concern with the plight of women in the face of an apparently uncaring Islamic court system. Nonetheless, as

[197] Zaharani, interview.

the next chapter shows, the journalists working on the women's pages of *Utusan* did not push the boundaries of male authority. As noted above, even in *DCCK*, structural bias against women was not discussed, instead what was diagnosed was problems in implementation of laws that were not, in themselves, discussed or questioned. *Berita Harian*, however, addressed different problems, and found different solutions.

Chapter Five: The different voices of women in *Berita Harian*

"I really love to write about these … NGO things, I want to know what is their concept, what they are fighting for…"

- Seri Intan Othman (*BH*, 1983-present)[1]

Berita Harian (*BH*)'s women journalists had a different perception of their role from their colleagues in *Utusan*. As Seri Intan's quote above shows, they were willing and able to push the boundaries of coverage on women's issues further and more frequently than their peers in the women's pages of *Utusan*. Thus, while both *BH* and *Utusan* engaged in constructing a compliant Malay-Muslim public, both class and their histories influenced how these two papers addressed their audiences. *BH* journalists addressed a middle- to upper-class audience in contrast to the lower-middle- to working-class readership presumed by *Utusan* editors, and had a different relationship, explored below, to the Umno. Rather than forging an identity with the Umno, *BH* positioned itself as a rational supporter of government policies.[2] It did not support Umno because it was Umno, it supported Umno because that made sense. In this vein, government policy was more likely to face criticism within the pages of *BH* than in *Utusan*, but due to the constraints of both legislation and journalists' career paths (see Chapter Three), this criticism was never aimed at either the party elite (the Prime Minister and those close to him) nor at key government policies.[3] Instead, it was aimed at the implementation of policy, the unforeseen impacts of policy, or ministers who were not central to government.[4] Likewise, Ariel Heryanto examines how middle class and intellectual Indonesians rationalised their support for the

[1] Seri Intan Othman in interview, Bangsar, 30 January 2014.
[2] E.g. "*Kumpulan Wang Amanah Kontraktor Perlu Betulkan Fungsi* (Kumpulan Wang Amanah Kontraktor [Government Lending Agency for Small Contractors] Needs to Rectify Function)," *Berita Harian*, 6 February 1988, 10; "*Prosedur Menyempurnakan Projek Binaan* (Procedure to Complete Construction Projects)," *Berita Harian*, 1 March 1989, 10; "*Usaha Percepat Pertumbuhan Ekonomi Luar Bandar* (Businesses to Speed up Rural Economic Growth)," *Berita Harian*, 1 March 1993, 10.
[3] For parallels in other contexts, see George, *Freedom from the Press*, 186; Bennett, Gressett, and Haltom, "Repairing the News"; Pan and Chan, "Shifting Journalistic Paradigms," 162-3.
[4] E.g. "*Kepimpinan Daerah Perlu Pendekatan Berwibawa* (District Leaders Need Authoritative Approach)," *Berita Harian*, 3 December 1987, 10; A. Nazri Abdullah, "*Melaka Bebas Daripada Fahaman Tabligh?* (Melaka Free from Tablighi Currents?)," *Berita Minggu*, 15 March 1992, 10.

Orde Baru (New Order) on economic grounds.[5] A key difference, however, was that *BH*, unlike its Indonesian counterparts, maintained support through economic recession and political turmoil, which was unsurprising given the legislative environment discussed in Chapter One.

In this chapter, I look at women as the bearers of culture in *BH*, particularly in the context of an Islam portrayed as being under attack from both modernity itself and by Western culture more broadly. Nadia Kaneva looking at the 2014 Eurovision contest similarly explores the dynamism of and female participation in a non-Western setting.[6] She argues that being cultural guardians is not something done *to* women, but something that women actively construct, an argument that finds resonance in my findings. The woman as a bearer of culture was central to the paper, but was at odds with the developmental woman and the female *Melayu Baru* imagined and promoted in Umno rhetoric. I illustrate these tensions through a case study of the coverage of a so-called "*pesta seks*" (sex fest) in the rural northern state of Kedah. I then analyse how the women's page journalists of *BH* were able to carve out a distinctive editorial identity for themselves, initiated in the mid-90s, but with continuing effect throughout this period, echoing the efforts of women writers studied elsewhere, from the US Jewish columnists at the start of the twentieth century described by Maxine Seller, to the Iranian women's press chronicled by Gholam Khiabany and Annabelle Sreberny.[7] I argue that confident editorial leadership of the women's pages by a second-generation journalist made a key difference to the capacity of the journalists to challenge the "malestream" editors. I examine this by looking at the coverage of the 1996 campaign for the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act (DVA). The political conditions of the mid-1990s allowed for greater activism by the women's page journalists, but this was curtailed due to both internal and external factors when Delaila Hussain, the editor during this period, left the newspaper.

Month/ Year	**Leader articles**	**Women's page articles**	**Religion articles**	**Total**
Oct-Dec 1987	303	115	48	466
Jan-March 1988	313	115	36	464
March 1989	87	38	19	141

[5] Ariel Heryanto, "Public Intellectuals, Media and Democratization: Cultural Politics of the Middle Classes in Indonesia," in *Challenging Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia: Comparing Indonesia and Malaysia*, ed. Ariel Heryanto and Sumit K. Mandal (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 27-8.
[6] Nadia Kaneva, "Mediating Post-Socialist Femininities," *Feminist Media Studies* 15, no. 1 (2015), 1-17.
[7] Maxine S Seller, "World of Our Mothers: The Women's Page of the Jewish Daily Forward," *The Journal of Ethnic Studies* 16, no. 2 (1988), 95-118; Gholam Khiabany and Annabelle Sreberny, "The Women's Press in Contemporary Iran: Engendering the Public Sphere," in *Women and Media in the Middle East: Power through Self-Expression*, ed. Naomi Sakr (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 15-38.

March 1990	99	48	16	163
March 1991	94	59	26	179
March 1992	87	50	16	153
March 1993	104	91**	14	209
March 1994*	72	54	n/a	126
March 1995*	65	86	12	163
Jan-June 1996	184	497	76	757
March 1997*	12	24	n/a	36
March-Aug 1998	600	1007	108	1715

Table 5-1: Articles analysed by article type, excluding front page articles and wire pieces.
*In these months, newspapers were often incomplete or missing.
**The near-doubling here signifies the introduction of *Berita Wanita*.

I analysed over 4,600 articles, but despite the higher number of articles than in *Utusan*, the corpus is about the same in terms of column inches. There was a sudden increase in the number of articles for the six months of 1998, but these articles were much shorter in length. This chapter begins by examining how neoliberalism was portrayed in *BH* and how this impacted upon the female *Melayu Baru.* The chapter does not mirror the previous chapter. Instead, I have focused on themes and how relationships within the editorial teams evolved.

Neoliberalism in *Berita Harian*

The reader of *BH* adhered to the behaviour of the archetypal *Melayu Baru*, discussed in the Introduction. He was already entrepreneurial, successful and, in meaningful ways, independent of government. As Patricia Sloane-White argues, the *Melayu Baru* felt a sense of debt to the government, to be repaid through gratitude and success.[8] Thus, in contrast to *Utusan* (see Chapter Four), neoliberalism was not a set of practices to be taught and adopted by the (male) readers of the paper.[9] This assumption allowed the editors of *BH* more room to negotiate the tensions between the *Melayu Baru*'s reliance on Umno and (his) independence than seen in the pages of *Utusan*. Here, paying close attention to both the sentence structures and the meso-context of the stories, I examine how neoliberalism was the unwritten assumption behind the construction of the reader of the leader page; how and when government intervention was justified; and lastly the imagined female *Melayu Baru* in

[8] Patricia Sloane-White, "The Hospitable Muslim Home in Urban Malaysia: A Sociable Site for Economic and Political Action," in *Commercial Homes in Tourism: An International Perspective*, ed. Paul A. Lynch, Alison J. McIntosh, and Hazel Tucker (London; New York: Routledge, 2009), 154.
[9] See the discussion of neoliberalism in Chapter One.

BH, focussed on the female reader as a career woman. Through articles and their editorial stance, malestream editors and journalists actively patrolled the boundaries of what it meant to be a "successful" Malay (man) through contrast with other Malays who failed to adhere to the behaviours needed to be successful. To illustrate how this boundary was marked in *BH*, I examine the coverage of two concurrent issues: graduate unemployment and the tourism industry. Both were concerns in the papers analysed from 1987 to 1989, the first because of the perceived increase in graduate unemployment in the wake of the recession at this time, and the second in the lead-up to the first "Visit Malaysia Year", 1990.

Journalists claimed graduate unemployment was the result of graduates being overly picky and unwilling to take less prestigious jobs, wanting only to work in "graduate" jobs.[10] Thus for example, on 5 October 1987, A Kadir Jasin, writing as Kunta Kinte, advised graduates to take whatever job they could get, and to work hard.[11] As with *Utusan*, the government perspective was privileged, with the main cause of unemployment being the "modern" problem of ingratitude (to the government) during hard times, with religious overtones. For example, Mahathir's Aidilfitri message in May 1988 urged those with poorly-paid jobs to remember how they had prayed for one when they were unemployed, drawing attention to the need to work hard, regardless of remuneration.[12] Likewise, Kadir maintained that "our people" (*orang kita*), presumably meaning unemployed graduates, did not understand the importance of quality. Instead, they wanted high salaries, without which they would not work. Thus, even though the rice fields were neglected, a "few hundred thousand" (*beratus ribu*) graduates refused to help their parents in the farm, and remained unemployed. This unwillingness to work had moral as well as economic implications, tied with the Prime Minister's view of neoliberal Islam, primarily propounded in *The Challenge* and explored in Chapter One.[13] Likewise, cultural studies researcher Kirsten Forkert notes in a UK-based case study of Cait Reilly, who took a legal challenge against a welfare for work programme, how the unemployed were portrayed as "job snobs".[14] A series of articles by International Islamic University Malaysia economist Naziruddin Abdullah who discussed

[10] Mahathir alluded to this as a potential problem as early as 1982, when he urged graduates to take jobs not out of self-interest, but in the national interest. Mahathir Mohamad, "National Youth Day Gathering," Prime Minister's Office, 15 May 1982.
[11] A Kadir Jasin was a committed supporter of Mahathir, and served as editor-in-chief of both the *New Straits Times* and *BH*. Jasin, "*Siswazah Menganggur Menjadi Harimau*."
[12] Mahathir Mohamad, "Aidilfitri Message," Prime Minister's Office, 17 May 1988.
[13] *The Challenge*, 4-16.
[14] Kirsten Forkert, "The New Moralism: Austerity, Silencing and Debt Morality," *Soundings: A journal of politics and culture* 56, no. 1 (2014), 41-53.

unemployment in a three-part series published daily from 14 October illustrates this connection.[15] In the first article, the writer made a neoliberal assessment of the causes of the international economic situation, explicitly identifying Malaysia as part of the weakening international economy. The international economy, however, was elided in further analysis, which separated the problem of graduate unemployment from the overall economic situation. Rather, he assessed unemployment as caused by education policies that were tainted by their colonial heritage, thus not responding to local needs, material and spiritual. As the title, *Pengangguran: Birokrasi antara puncanya* (*Unemployment: Bureaucracy among the causes*), indicates, bureaucratic ignorance of how the economy works was one source of the ongoing economic downturn, which could be addressed through less saving and more consumption (on an individual level).[16] In the second installation, on 15 October, he identified individual traits as the major cause of unemployment, arguing for graduates to become entrepreneurs. In the last instalment, the writer called upon the *dakwah* movements and bodies to help address the moral shortcomings of unemployed graduates. Thus, he built upon the previous two articles, calling upon various Malay-Muslim institutions to tackle the problem. The editorial staff at *BH* chose to highlight this issue in their headline, playing on the importance of good morals and the correct Islamic outlook in tackling unemployment. Throughout this series, Naziruddin framed unemployment in terms of individual unwillingness to work, due to a poor moral framework, heightened by misguided bureaucratic efforts, rather than a result of macroeconomic conditions.[17] The primary institutional factors, affecting the local and regional economy, were elided. The cause of graduate unemployment was the moral failings of the graduates themselves, and a willingness to work would overcome the problem. Aihwa Ong discusses how citizenship under neoliberalism is divided into worthy and less worthy citizens, the latter being those who are seen as not working sufficiently hard, or sufficiently smart.[18] In similar vein, an essential difference was posited between the graduates

[15] Abdullah, "*Pengangguran: Birokrasi Antara Puncanya*"; Naziruddin Abdullah, "Pengangguran: Cara Mengurangkannya (Unemployment: How to Reduce It)," *Berita Harian*, 15 October 1987, 10; Naziruddin Abdullah, "*Badan Dakwah Harus Sama Atasi Pengangguran* (Dakwah Bodies Must Also Tackle Unemployment)," *Berita Harian*, 16 October 1987, 10.

[16] There was a government campaign to increase savings at the time, so these articles also illustrate the limited space for criticism of the implementation of government policy. Mahathir Mohamad, "Felda Awards' Ceremony," Prime Minister's Office, 8 August 1988.

[17] See also Suthakar, "*Mahu Gaji Kurang Atau Penganggur*"; Bahrin Mohd. Kassim, "*Mewujudkan Golongan Belia Yang Bertanggungjawab* (Building Responsible Youth)," *Berita Harian*, 26 January 1988, 10; "*Tujuan Dapatkan Ilmu Lebih Penting* (Reason for Gaining Knowledge More Important)," *Berita Harian*, 3 March 1988, 10. The theme is also present on the *Wanita* pages: Saari Sarif and Mala Radzi, "*Belia Dan Suri Rumah Digalak Niaga Makan* (Youth and Housewives Urged to Set up Food/ Restaurant Business)," *Berita Harian*, 24 December 1987, 22.

[18] Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 16. See also Brown, "American Nightmare," 703; Gershon, "Neoliberal Agency."; McNay, "Self as Enterprise."

of "today" and those of yesteryear, explored further elsewhere in the newspaper.[19] Thus, the out-of-work graduate failed to mold themselves into the successful *Melayu Baru.* As I argue below, the unemployed graduate contrasted with the newspaper's own readers, who were presented as being successful, yet in need of government assistance because their success attracted "jealousy", causing others to undermine them.

While independence was framed as necessary for fresh graduates (not framed as being *BH* readers), government economic assistance was called for in addressing the impact of the recession upon small businesses and tourism.[20] There were various stages to the justification for economic assistance. First, editorials discussed these industries as being vital to the economy, and as having an impact directly or indirectly upon the *BH* reader.[21] This series of articles began with a guest article on 16 December 1987, and was continued in several articles, on both the leader and *Wanita* pages thereafter.[22] In these articles, government intervention was presented as necessary and important. Tourism operators, for instance, were set up as being worthy of assistance, partly due to the optimism surrounding the potential of Visit Malaysia Year 1990, again privileging the government voice. In his 1989 New Year's Eve speech, Mahathir asserted that "We have better potential than other nations to achieve high development" and described the achievements and potential of Malaysian entrepreneurs who value hard work.[23] Thus, tourism operators were exhorted to make the most of opportunities, yet they had insufficient knowledge to do so. The tension here was not whether government assistance was needed, but whether "the Malays" (portrayed as being unproblematically the sole target of government largesse, rather than say "the poor", regardless of race) could maintain their status as *Melayu Baru* even with government assistance. As noted by economist Jomo Kwame Sundaram,

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[19] E.g. A. Kadir Jasin, "*Bantu Yang Diam Tetapi Berisi* (Help Those Who Are Quiet, but Substantive)," *Berita Harian*, 23 November 1987, 10; Zaini Ujang, "*Membentuk Pemikiran Martabat Tinggi* (Building Prestigious Thought)," *Berita Harian*, 4 January 1988, 10; "*Jangan Pelawa Penonton Naik Pentas* (Don't Invite Audience onto Stage)," *Berita Harian*, 13 February 1988, 10.

[20] Differentiated neoliberalism is also studied in, eg, Allen et al., "Welfare Queens, Thrifty Housewives, and Do-It-All Mums"; Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor : The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*, Politics, History, and Culture (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 306-11.

[21] "*Wujudkan Kerjasama Maju Industri Pelancongan* (Cooperation to Develop Tourism Industry)," *Berita Harian*, 13 November 1987, 10; A. Kadir Jasin, "*Datuk Sabaruddin, Jangan Biar Pelancongan Melencong* (Datuk Sabaruddin, Don't Let Tourists Go Past)," *Berita Harian*, 25 January 1988, 10; "*Syarikat Pelancongan Melayu Di Persimpangan* (Malay Tourism Companies at Crossroads)," *Berita Harian*, 11 March 1988, 10.

[22] "*Ringgit Yang Murah Boleh Tarik Pelancong* (Cheap Ringgit Can Attract Tourists)," *Berita Harian*, 16 February 1988, 10; "*Bukan Pantai Tanjung Jara Saja Indah* (Tanjung Jara Isn't the Only Beautiful Beach)," *Berita Harian*, 7 March 1988, 10; Shamsiah Sanin, "*'Tugas Pemandu Pelancong Memang Mencabar'* ('Duty of Tourism Guides Definitely Challenging')," *Berita Harian*, 2 March 1989, 15.

[23] "*Kita mempunyai potensi yang lebih baik daripada negara-negara lain untuk mencapai pembangunan yang tinggi."* Mahathir Mohamad, "Launch of Visit Malaysia Year, 1990 New Year's Goals and Launch of Dataran Merdeka," Prime Minister's Office, 31 December 1989.

affirmative action policies seemed to be needed for political rather than economic reasons, so there was no economic point at which government assistance would not be needed.[24] Both Mahathir and the articles analysed portrayed tourism operators as being "under siege", locally (from Chinese Malaysians, as in the 16 February article above), regionally and internationally. Launching Visit Malaysia Year, Mahathir warned, "Don't let Malaysians be easily taken in by Western propaganda [to neglect local attractions]."[25] These findings however offer only limited support to Kikue Hamayotsu's argument in a 2002 paper, that the major perceived threat to Malays shifted from the internal Chinese Other to the Western Other.[26] Rather, I find that the two were complementary, and tended to be seen in similar terms. In *BH*, for example, threats came mainly from Singapore, but occasionally they were portrayed as coming from different Malaysian ethnic groups, especially "the Chinese."[27] Thus, *BH* readers needed government assistance, not because they were unwilling to work hard, nor because they were lacking either morals or skills, but due to external forces.

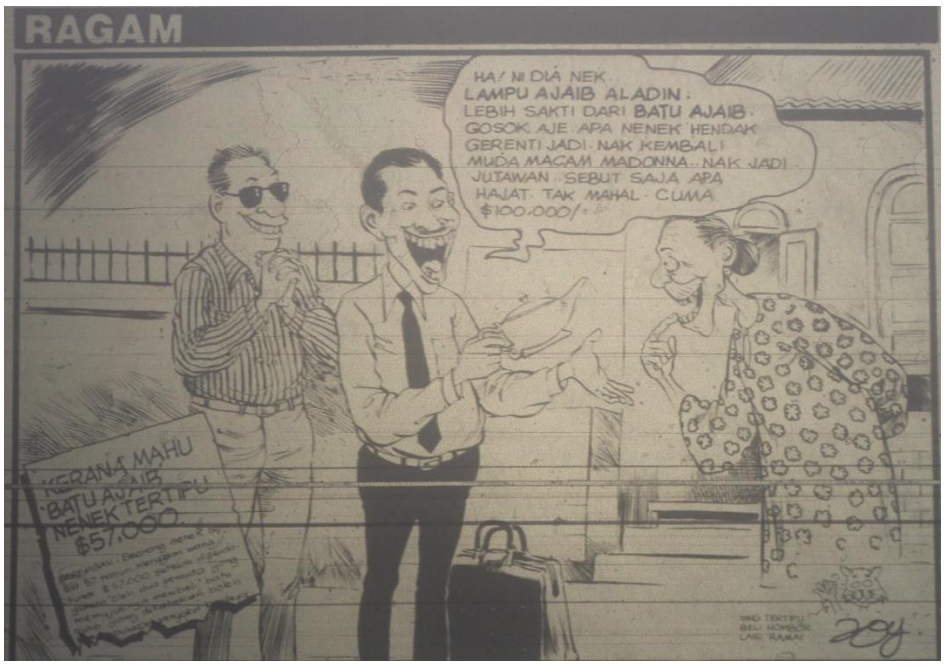

Figure 5-1: Ragam (cartoon) Chinese-looking man selling "Aladdin's lamp" to a Malay grandmother[28]

[24] Jomo Kwame Sundaram, "The New Economic Policy and Interethnic Relations in Malaysia," (UNRISD Geneva, 2004), 7-8.
[25] "*Rakyat Malaysia janganlah terlalu mudah terpengaruh dengan propaganda-propaganda Barat."*
[26] Hamayotsu, "Islam and Nation Building in Southeast Asia," 340.
[27] "*Usah Sekat Pelancong Ke Malaysia* (Remove Barriers for Tourists to Malaysia)," *Berita Harian*, 2 July 1998, 10. See also Abu Bakar Ismail, "*Apakah Cukup Dengan Minta Maaf?* (Is Sorry Enough?)," *Berita Minggu*, 11 October 1987, 8.
[28] Mohd Zohri 'Zoy' Sukimi, "Ragam," *Berita Harian*, 6 March 1988, 10.

The *BH* editors solved the conundrum seen in *Utusan* in the last chapter, that is, the tension between the need for independence from government contrasted with the ongoing need to ensure voters' loyalty through dependence upon "Umno" handouts. There was a need for "others", such as graduates, to be independent of government. In contrast, middle- to upper-class *BH* readers needed government assistance because they were successful and independent, attracting the jealousy of others determined to keep Malaysia and/ or "the Malays" subservient and in chaos.[29] Neoliberalism was for those who did not read the malestream *BH*, including unemployed (Malay-identifying) graduates and, as I show below, women.

***The female* 'Melayu Baru'*in* BH**

Here, I examine how the female *Melayu Baru* in *BH*'s women's pages was consciously constructed as a career woman, rather than the entrepreneur of *Utusan*. The main difference between these two portrayals was class. The career woman was office-based, and middle- to upper-class, while her *Utusan* entrepreneur counterpart was lower- to lower-middle class. Maila Stivens has documented the Malay-identifying career woman through ethnography and examining Malay-language magazines. Stivens noted how "she" was framed in the early 1990s by contradictory and conflicting messages and concerns, ranging from Islamic femininities to consumerism. [30] This research reinforces and extends Stivens' findings through examination of how the career woman changed over time in *BH*, and how she was presented by the male writers of the newspaper.

The theme of the career woman became more prominent over time. Thus, in October 1987, only two articles addressed the possibility of women as workers or as a possible career woman.[31] Both looked at problems in the concept of "career woman" itself. The first article, on 20 October, examined whether women should work, through interviews with four academics. While the article firmly said women could work, family should come first.[32] This scrutiny of whether women belong in the workforce was absent later in the period examined. In itself this debate was an indicator of class: Rural Malay women had shown high rates of workforce participation, as examined by Charles Hirschman

[29] E.g. Rastom Diturki, "*Perang Pengaruh Melalui Pancaran Radio* (War Waged through Radio Broadcasts)," *Berita Harian*, 14 January 1988, 8.
[30] Stivens, "Sex, Gender and the Making of the New Malay Middle Class," 93-4.
[31] Faridah Mansoer, "*Isu Jantina Tidak Patut Timbul* (Issue of Sex Shouldn't Arise)," *Berita Harian*, 20 October 1987, 18; Azizah Abdul Jalil, "*Ada Suami Tidak Senang Dengan Kejayaan Isteri?* (Are Husbands Uneasy with Their Wife's Success?)," *Berita Harian*, 22 October 1987, 15.
[32] See also the second paragraph "Sixth Malaysia Plan," 413.

and Akbar Aghajanian in relation to the period 1957-1970.[33] Debate existed only in relation to middle- to upper-class women. The second article two days later inspected husbands' attitudes to working wives, through an interview with a male author. The reader in 1987 was also portrayed as a consumer, dependent upon the working women. Thus, for example, on 1 October, the journalist addreses a reader perceived to be a consumer at the mercy of salespeople, rather than as a possible salesperson herself.[34] This positioning again reflected class and the assumption of an audience of consumers, rather than workers. In contrast, a decade later, in March 1998, there were over 40 articles that dealt with the working woman as a career woman. A prominent theme was women's relationship to information technology (IT), in line with a government drive to promote Malaysia as a hub for information technology, the Multimedia Super Corridor and the increasing promotion of the use of computers both at home and at work. As geographer Tim Bunnell argues, the drive for IT literacy was often at odds with the affirmative action policies of the Umno.[35] In *BH*, this tension was resolved through a focus on building the capacity of Malay-Muslim women as technologically savvy. Further, in the Seventh Malaysia Plan, the role of the media in promoting IT was flagged:[36] On 2 March 1998, in *BH*, women were reassured that they should be confident of a career in IT.[37] The women writers were using Umno rhetoric, as in *Utusan*, as the basis for space for women beyond the bearers of culture seen on the leader page (explored below). Thus, by 1998, articles showed that women readers were expected to be pursuing an office-based career, at the forefront of new careers opening up, and the *Wanita* editorial team was addressing the challenges and opportunities available.

Problems that these career women experienced juggling work and family were to be met individually.[38] On the same page as the IT story above, there was a product promotion for vitamins.[39] Despite numerous articles around women's multiple responsibilities, this article attributed women's tiredness to marginal vitamin deficiency. Solutions to women's problems, thus, came from better self-management, or from purchases, rather than from structural or institutional change. This emphasis on self-management was also evident in another article two days later, in contrast to the reliance on

[33] Hirschman and Aghajanian, "Women's Labour Force Participation and Socioeconomic Development."
[34] "*Cuba Tarik Pelanggan Dengan Bijaksana* (Attract Customers Wisely)," *Berita Harian*, 1 October 1987, 18.
[35] Tim Bunnell, "(Re)Positioning Malaysia: High-Tech Networks and the Multicultural Rescripting of National Identity," *Political Geography*, no. 1 (2002), 105-24.
[36] "Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000)," 464.
[37] "*Mariah Kecewakan Ibu Bapa Kerana IT* (Mariah Surprises Parents Because of IT)," *Berita Harian*, 2 March 1998, 22.
[38] The 6MP does mention the need for more equal sharing of housework, but resources are put into training and skills building for women, rather than structural change such as increased paternity leave. "Sixth Malaysia Plan," 414.
[39] "*Supradyn Bekalkan Zat Galian Penting* (Supradyn Supplies Important Minerals)," *Berita Harian*, 2 March 1998, 22.

government assistance seen for the male readers of the paper explored above.[40] The Asian financial crisis had resulted in mass redundancies, which disproportionately affected women.[41] The umbrella women's group NCWO was concerned that women's confidence was falling, and organised a workshop to help ameliorate the problem. Thus, the qualities of the women themselves were the problem, not the external situation. The article also stressed that attendance was not for personal benefit. Rather, attendance would serve the national interest, helping prevent women from engaging in currency speculation, particularly in selling ringgit. Women were being addressed as a point of national vulnerability. The working of power here shows that women, despite being disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of the crisis, were framed as a problem, rather than needing assistance. Thus, the financial crisis adversely impacted women twice-over. Last, while the career as hobby trope was present, careers were more important to the women in *BH* than in *Utusan* (examined in Chapter Five). Thus, for example, the 31 March 1998 *Berita Wanita* lead was on sexual harassment in the workplace.[42] The first article placed the onus on the lack of reporting sexual harassment on the victim's feelings of shame, rather than institutional factors such as discrimination against victims. On the following page, however, various articles framed harassment through women's human rights, their ability to work, and the impact upon their mental health and wellbeing.[43] This feminist focus was primarily through the words of activist Zaitun Mohamed Kassim, rather than as a campaign taken up by the paper itself, and the articles that framed this discussion showed sympathy to perpetrators as well as victims.[44] Nonetheless, the space given to the feminist perspective indicated recognition that a woman's career was a way through which women, like men, constituted their identity. The breadth, depth and range of issues discussed as making up a woman's working life, from fashion to education and skills building, outstripped what was seen in *Utusan*.[45]

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[40] Rosmin Darus, "*Ceramah Ekonomi NCWO Kembalikan Keyakinan Wanita* (NCWO Economic Workshop Restores Women's Confidence)," *Berita Harian*, 4 March 1998, 24.
[41] "*Wanita Hilang Pekerjaan Dibantu* (Women Who Lose Their Jobs Helped)," *Berita Harian*, 3 March 1998, *Berita Wanita* 2.
[42] The title refers to a crawling sensation, or itchiness, due to harassing catcalls. Wan Nurmawati Abdul Rani and Hazirah Che Sab, "*Siulan Gatal* (Creepy Whistles)," *Berita Harian*, 31 March 1998, *Berita Wanita* 1.
[43] Wan Nurmawati Abdul Rani and Hazirah Che Sab, "*Jangan Malu Adu Kepada Polis* (Don't Be Ashamed to Report to Police)," *Berita Harian*, 31 March 1998, *Berita Wanita* 4; Wan Nurmawati Abdul Rani and Hazirah Che Sab, "*Definisi Gangguan Seksual* (Definition of Sexual Harassment)," *Berita Harian*, 31 March 1998, *Berita Wanita* 5.
[44] E.g. Wan Nurmawati Abdul Rani and Hazirah Che Sab, "*Lelaki Suka Ganggu Kerana Bosan* (Men Like to Harass Because They're Bored)," *Berita Harian*, 31 March 1998, *Berita Wanita* 6.
[45] E.g. "*Bergaya Selesa Ke Pejabat* (Comfortable Style for the Office)," *Berita Harian* 1996, 27; Adibah Amin, "*Membina Rangkaian Kenalan Yang Tulen Budiman* (Build Honourable Networks)," *Berita Harian*, 7 March 1989, 11.

Various themes can be extrapolated from these articles. There were concerns with balancing career and family. Among the 40 articles from March 1998, being a mother was a prominent concern. Thus, the front page of the *Berita Wanita* (Women's News) pull-out on 17 March was about packing school lunches.[46] The front page resembled the front page of a magazine. It was highly pictoral, in this case showing two children displaying their lunchboxes proudly, while an inset photo showed them flanking their mother as she filled the boxes. The front page highlighted what was to come inside the 12-page pull-out, anticipating three to four articles on the same theme, in this case four articles spread over two pages. Three of these articles were about why women pack lunches, which was portrayed as an act of maternal love on the part of working women.[47] The fourth story was an interview with a chef regarding what to pack, with a sidebar menu.[48] Thus, the main aim was to give women tips about fulfilling maternal duties, showing love and care by making hand-prepared lunches, despite going to work: Likewise, in what seems an extreme case, anthropologist Anne Allison has examined how Japanese lunch-boxes for nursery children construct women as good mothers, whose love is shown through food consumed in a controlled, public setting.[49] In contrast, as noted in the section below on religion, there was concurrently consistent concern with "social ills" among young people, and working parents were often blamed for not giving their children sufficient care or attention, similar to the findings by Sara Niner et al looking at the issue of child abuse in the English-language daily, *The Star*.[50] A woman's choice to work was at odds with their ability to be a "good mother", a tension that finds little reconciliation in these pages.[51]

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[46] Wan Nurmawati Abdul Rani and Hazirah Che Sab, "*Menu Sekolah* (School Menus)," *Berita Harian*, 17 March 1998, *Berita Wanita* 1.

[47] Wan Nurmawati Abdul Rani and Hazirah Che Sab, "*Bekal Menjimatkan Belanja* (Packing Saves Money)," *Berita Harian*, 17 March 1998, *Berita Wanita* 4; Wan Nurmawati Abdul Rani and Hazirah Che Sab, "*Peluang Memupuk Kasih Sayang* (Chance to Nourish Love)," *Berita Harian*, 17 March 1998, *Berita Wanita* 4; Wan Nurmawati Abdul Rani, "*Kreativiti Rangsang Anak Makan* (Creativity Excites Children's Appetite)," *Berita Harian*, 17 March 1998, *Berita Wanita* 5.

[48] Wan Nurmawati Abdul Rani and Hazirah Che Sab, "*Bekalan Untuk Alas Perut* (Pack for the Stomach)," *Berita Harian*, 17 March 1998, *Berita Wanita* 5.

[49] Anne Allison, "Japanese Mothers and Obentos: The Lunch-Box as Ideological State Apparatus," *Anthropological Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (1991), 195-208.

[50] Sara Niner, Yarina Ahmad, and Denise Cuthbert, "The 'Social Tsunami': Media Coverage of Child Abuse in Malaysia's English-Language Newspapers in 2010," *Media, Culture & Society* 35, no. 4 (2013), 435-53. A typical story is Wan Kemat, "*Pendakwah Bendung Gejala Sosial* (Proselytisers a Barrier to Social Ills)," *Berita Minggu*, 5 May 1996, 18. For similar gender constructions elsewhere, see Kim Akass, "Motherhood and Myth-Making: Despatches from the Frontline of the US Mommy Wars," *Feminist Media Studies* 12, no. 1 (2011), 137-41; Shani Orgad and Sara De Benedictis, "The 'Stay-at-Home' mother, Postfeminism and Neoliberalism: Content Analysis of UK News Coverage," *European Journal of Communication* 30, no. 4 (2015), 418-36.

[51] See, e.g., how mothers working at night were mocked for setting a bad example: Malaysia, *Parliamentary Debates*, Dewan Rakyat, 3 December 1996, 29, Badruddin Amiruldin.

Figure 5-2: Front page of Berita Wanita*, headlined 'School Menu'*.

Career women were expected to juggle these competing demands not by demanding equality, but by managing their time and commitments. Equality was demonised, for example, in one article where

NGOs vociferously denied that it was part of their agenda.[52] Time management and flexible working hours were both posited as possible solutions.[53] A working woman's responsibility extended to managing the household affairs competently, so there were various articles across the period examined on managing domestic help.[54] The growing reliance of the Malay middle class woman on domestic workers during this period has been examined by Christine Chin, who argues that they were integral to the formation of the middle classes, which explains the prominence of this theme in *BH* compared to *Utusan*.[55] Thus, while women's unequal burden within the household was recognised, the solutions proposed were aimed at individual rather than institutional reform, resonating with Smitha Radhakrishnan and Cinzia Solari's finding that neoliberalism can work with the feminist rhetoric of empowerment to increase rather than ameliorate gendered burdens.[56] Thus, the assumptions and expectations that shaped the female *Melayu Baru* were at odds with those shaping their male counterpart. While "he" was reliant on the state because "his" success attracts the jealousy and ire of others, "she" was expected to be independent of the state. "She" was expected to carry the burden of discriminatory practices (such as the firing of women during the recession, sexual harassment and unequal domestic duties) and handle these herself. Assistance, as such, came as training rather than economic assistance or equality in the home or workplace, mirroring what was available to the graduates discussed above. Yet, simultaneously, this independence and the importance of work to women framed a public role for women which contrasted with the male editorial hierarchy's focus on women as the guardians of the family, under attack from modernity, explored below. I look at how one of these burdens - the transmission of culture - was portrayed and the problems it raised for women both as mothers and daughters.

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[52] Wan Nurmawati Abdul Rani, "*N.G.O. Tolak Dakwaan Wanita Tuntut Hak Sama* (N.G.O.s Reject the Accusation Women Demand Equal Rights)," *Berita Harian*, 11 March 1998, 24. See also Mohamad, *The Challenge*, 69-70.

[53] Rohaya Haji Ishak, "*Puan Sartini Menang Gubahan Agar-Agar Kering* (Mrs Sartini Wins Candied Jelly Competition)," *Berita Minggu*, 4 October 1987, *Berita Wanita* 4; Wan Nurmawati Abdul Rani, "*Cadangan Sistem Anjal Disokong* (Flexible Work Suggestion Supported)," *Berita Harian*, 10 January 1996, 22; "*Tuntutan Terhadap Wanita Hebat* (Demands Upon Women Are Great)," *Berita Harian*, 26 March 1998, 24.

[54] Delaila Hussain, "*Pembantu Rumah Bukan Lagi Masalah Domestik* (Home Help Not Just a Domestic Problem)," *Berita Harian*, 28 March 1995, *Berita Wanita* 2; Rosmin Darus, "*Uji Kestabilan Mental Pembantu* (Test Mental Stability of Help)," *Berita Harian*, 2 February 1996, 25; Rosmin Darus, "*Boleh Rayu Ambil Pembantu* (Can Appeal for Home Help)," *Berita Harian*, 12 March 1998, 24.

[55] Christine B.N. Chin, "In Service & Servitude: Foreign Female Domestic Workers and the Malaysian Modernity Project" (American University, 1995).

[56] Smitha Radhakrishnan and Cinzia Solari, "Empowered Women, Failed Patriarchs: Neoliberalism and Global Gender Anxieties," *Sociology Compass* 9, no. 9 (2015), 784-802. See also Acker, "Gender, Capitalism and Globalization."; McNay, "Self as Enterprise."

Women as bearers of culture

One important way in which women were constructed on the leader page was as the bearers of culture, responsible for safe-guarding tradition.[57] While women were present more frequently on the leader pages of *BH* than *Utusan*, writers assumed the reader of this section was male.[58] Even in an article on rape in October 1987, there was no mention of women, only of "victims".[59] Although the Attorney-General, the public and the government were all cited through words or actions, women's groups who had been at the forefront of demanding changes to existing laws were absent.[60] Women were often portrayed as superficial and emotional. For example, a cartoon in December 1987 (Fig. 5-3) clearly indicated that while men talk, women gossip.[61] While the cartoonist gave women nonsense (Bla, Pok, Pek) to speak, the men were given words, with which they discuss the women. These articles were not isolated in their elision of women.[62] In December 1987, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia academic Zainab Ismail discussed how Muslim mothers were challenged by environmental factors in their quest to bring up faithful children.[63] Zainab framed a woman's life and career choices by her ability to transmit cultural and religious messages to her children. Prominent among the considerations was the role of non-Muslims. For example, the concern that if women did not take up leadership positions, they may not be filled by a Muslim man, but by a non-Muslim. Other career choices, such as being a beautician were framed in a similar way – the writer said Muslim women are forbidden from unveiling in the presence of non-Muslim women, implying that more Muslim women should enter this field or abstain from using beauticians and hairdressers. Zainab further says this abstinence would provide a good example for their children. Thus, every aspect of a Muslim woman's life was framed by its impact on her ability to raise her children as faithful Muslims. Women's autonomy in both the leader and the religion pages was restricted by the primary roles as wife and mother. Interestingly, despite women appearing more often on the women's pages of *BH* than *Utusan*,

[57] Mahathir Mohamad, "*Sempena Hari Wanita* (Women's Day Dedication)," Prime Minister's Office, 25 August 1992.
[58] Women are often absent from the leader pages, see also Harp, Bachmann, and Loke, "Where Are the Women?."
[59] "*Pindaan Undang-Undang Rogol Dialu-Alukan* (Rape Law Amendments Welcomed)," *Berita Harian*, 27 October 1987, 10.
[60] Discussed in Rohana Ariffin, "Feminism in Malaysia: A Historical and Present Perspective of Women's Struggles in Malaysia," *Women's Studies International Forum* 22, no. 4 (1999), 420.
[61] Mohd Zohri 'Zoy' Sukimi, "Ragam," *Berita Harian*, 13 December 1987, 10.
[62] See also Si Kitol, "*Melentang, Meniarap, Mencangkung Semuanya Boleh* (Lying Down, Face up, Huddled over, Any Which Way Is Possible)," *Berita Harian*, 24 January 1988, 9; 'P.T.O.', "*Di Antara Nilai Estetika Dan Budaya Melayu* (Between Aesthetic and Malay Cultural Values)," *Berita Harian*, 15 March 1995, 8.
[63] Zainab Ismail, "*Wanita Wadah Transmisi Budaya Islam* (Women Vessels for Transmitting Islamic Culture)," *Berita Harian*, 25 December 1987, 10.

the former did not replicate the early period of *Utusan*'s leader page, in terms of an autonomous female reader endowed with rights.

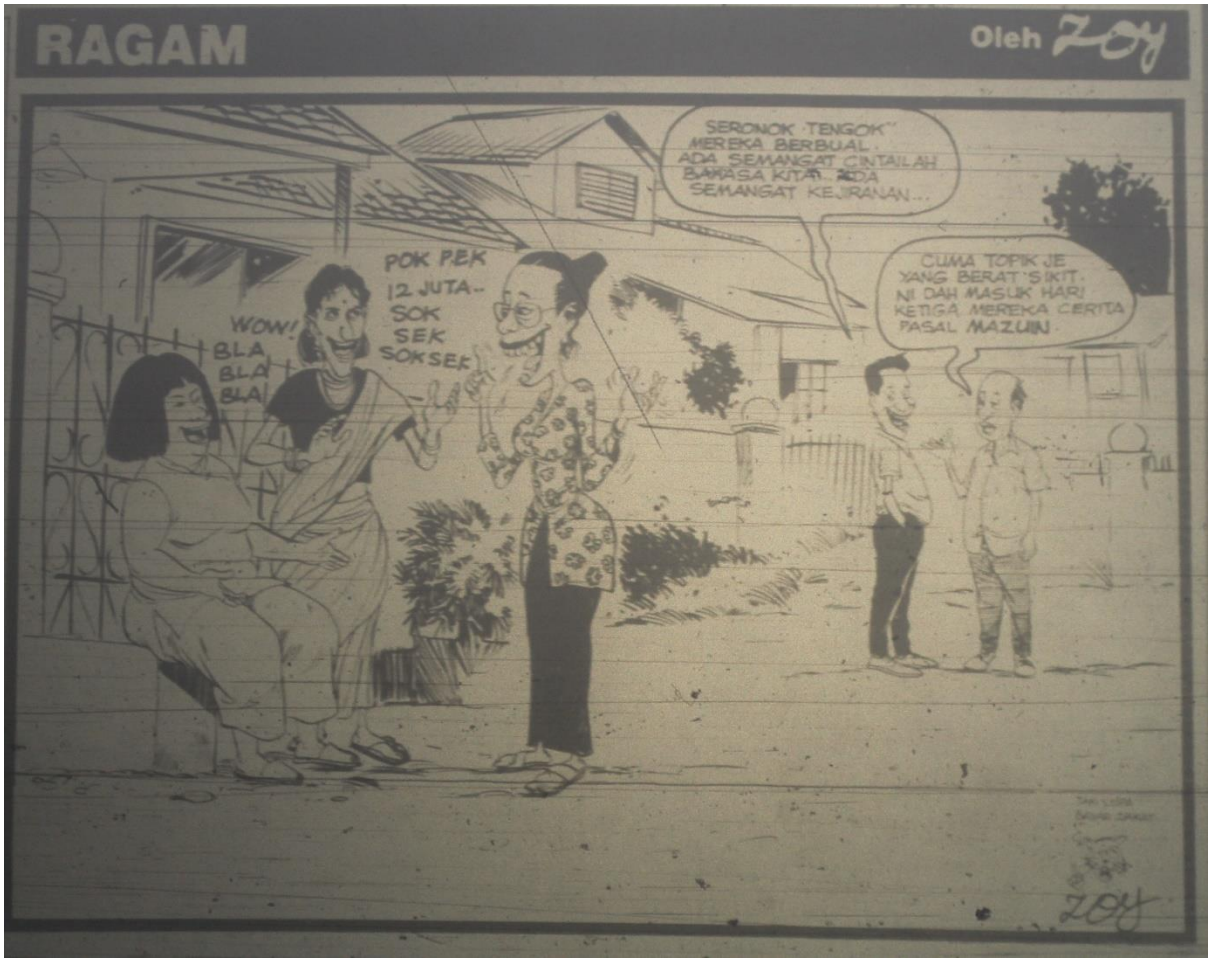

Figure 5-3: The first man praises the women for talking in the national language; the second is dismissive saying they are just talking about a handsome sportsman.[64]

In the following sub-section, I examine how this role, as transmitter of culture, was perceived as being under threat due to modernity. Then I look at a specific case study of what was termed a "sex fest" (*pesta seks*) in the northern state of Kedah, which illustrates how girls bore the burden of these contradictions.

[64] Sukimi, "Ragam."

Islam under threat and the role of women as protectors of culture

Different parts of the paper constructed development differently. Here, I look at Islam in the religion (*Gema Islam*) pages of the newspaper between 1992 and 1998. In the religion pages, prior to 1992, development was portrayed in a positive light, but as something which needed to be infused with Islamic values to ensure that "progress" was culturally appropriate.[65] Similarly, in *The Challenge*, Mahathir said, "only when Muslims are equipped with the tools and skills of the modern world can it be ensured that they continue to uphold the spiritual values which will bring them happiness in this world and the next."[66] The construction of neoliberal individualism and entrepreneurship as the answer to the economic misfortunes of Islamic countries prefigures the solution proffered by the *AKP* in Turkey, as examined by Ozan Karaman, who argues that the conjunction of Islamism and neoliberalism allowed new solutions to the *AKP*'s social justice programme, rather than an abandonment of this programme.[67] Prior to 1996, articles on development were epitomised by a series on "Islam and development" (*Islam dan pembangunan*) that ran through the months analysed in 1988. The series began by looking at how the concept of linear development evolved in the West, and how, though secular, it initially was attached to both moral and material development.[68] The writer, (Raja) Mohd Affandi, in the same vein as Karaman above, argues that the only way to achieve development is through an Islamic conception of development, based upon social justice.[69]

This focus on development through social justice differed from the threatening spectre of development and modernity evident from 1992 onwards. Rather than seeing development as redeemable through an infusion of Islam, Islam became an alternative to a modernity that threatened both society and the nation, primarily through the corruption of youth and children. Thus, for example, one of the first stories published in the religion pages in 1996 began "Concerns about moral collapse and crisis are becoming more serious."[70] This article suggested increasing religiosity among all Malaysians as the answer, noting "moral collapse" was a universal problem affecting all races. Other

[65] E.g. Talib Samat, "*Mengembalikan Kegemilangan Umat Islam* (Returning the Glory of Muslims)," *Berita Minggu*, 6 March 1988, 13.
[66] Mohamad, *The Challenge*, 82.
[67] Ozan Karaman, "Urban Neoliberalism with Islamic Characteristics," *Urban Studies* 50, no. 16 (2013), 3412-27.
[68] E.g. Mohd Affandi, "*Konsep Kemajuan Zaman Pramoden* (Premodern Concept of Development)," *Berita Minggu*, 10 January 1988, 13.
[69] E.g. Mohd Affandi, "*Konsep Kemajuan Menurut Pemikir Barat* (Development through Western Thinkers)," *Berita Minggu*, 17 January 1988, 20.
[70] "*Kebimbangan mengenai kemelut keruntuhan akhlak kini semakin serius*." Mohd Farid Mohd Shahran, "*Program Belia Perlu Pendekatan Agama* (Youth Programs Need Religious Approach)," *Berita Minggu*, 7 January 1996, 19.

articles said Islam, rather than all religions, was the answer to this "crisis": An article in May 1996 said "total mobilization" (*Penggemblengan usaha secara total*) was needed to tackle social ills (*gejala sosial*), and that the answers were to be found within the (presumably Muslim) *dakwah* movements, echoing the solutions posited by the state in Maila Stivens' work on Islamic Family Values.[71] Even the 1998 water crisis that Malaysia was undergoing could be alleviated through faith.[72] In these and similar articles, writers viewed development pessimistically, as something that fundamentally challenged the fabric of Eastern society in general, and Islamic Malay society in particular.[73] They suggested prayer and proselytization as solutions to these problems, indicative of the turn to Islam. This problematised and fearful perception of development and modernity was also evident in the columns of the leader page, whether the officially religious Friday articles or the daily columns by *BH* journalists. They generally offer the same answers to the same perceived problems, with only slight differences in framing, the former being more likely to caution against religious extremism.[74] For example, the lead article on 4 March, responding to a speech by Mahathir, argues against following fanaticism, which would lead to further decline (*kemunduran*).[75] A return to the real religion (*agama sebenar*) would prevent a sense of loss (*kerugian*). The article also extols the virtues of hard work, echoing the key theme of Mahathir's speech.[76] As with *Utusan*, the official voices in Umno were privileged above alternative sources.

In terms of women as bearers of culture, primarily through cultivating virtue, there was a stark contrast over time in the depiction of women in the women's pages, which can be illustrated by looking at the different reactions to economic recession at the start and end of the period analysed. Both periods of economic recession were marked with articles on thrift, on making do and on women supplementing the family income. However, in the late 1990s, writers presented thrift as an Islamic

[71] Wan Kemat, "*Pendakwah Bendung Gejala Sosial* (Proselytisers a Barrier to Social Ills)," *Berita Minggu*, 5 May 1996, 18; Stivens, "'Family Values' and Islamic Revival."
[72] E.g. Abdul Rashid Ahmad, "*Manusia Memerlukan Allah Setiap Masa* (Humanity Needs Allah at All Times)," *Berita Minggu*, 19 April 1998, 18; Wan Hishamuddin Wan Jusoh, "*Bencana Alam Kerana Sikap Rakus Manusia Sendiri* (Natural Disasters Because of Humanity's Hubris)," *Berita Minggu*, 17 May 1998, 18.
[73] See also Paimin Abdullah Yusuff, "*Islam Tuntut Umatnya Kerja Keras* (Islam Demands Its Followers Work Hard)," *Berita Minggu*, 12 March 1995, 17; Abd Halim Abu Bakar, "*Mengangkis Tanggapan Negatif Terhadap Islam* (Rebut Negative Perceptions of Islam)," *Berita Minggu*, 31 March 1996, 18; Mohd Izani Mohd Zain, "*Islamophobia Bertujuan Menyekat Kemaraan Islam* (Islamophobia Aims to Isolate Islamic Development)," *Berita Minggu*, 19 April 1998, 18.
[74] See also Nakhaie Ahmad, "*Kegagalan Parti Islam Menangani Arus Kebangkitan* (Failure of Islamic Parties to Handle Revival)," *Berita Harian*, 23 January 1996, 8; Izwan Ismail, "*Ulama Perlu Mencetuskan Kebangkitan Tamadun Ummah* (Ulama Need to Spark Islamic Civilisational Revival)," *Berita Harian*, 5 April 1996, 8.
[75] "*Dimensi Baru Dalam Pemikiran Umat* (New Dimesions in Muslim Thought)," *Berita Harian*, 5 March 1995, 8.
[76] Mahathir Mohamad, "*Perutusan Hari Raya Aidilfitri* (Aidilfitri Message)," Prime Minister's Office, 3 March 1995.

virtue, opposed to Western consumerism and hedonism.[77] Women were constructed as bearers of traditional virtue by opposing consumerism. What I explore below is how this occurred simultaneously with an increase in articles that valorised consumption, which had been present but in much smaller number and size in the women's pages prior to 1994. Interestingly, discussions of virtue were generally confined to the private realm, in contrast to the public role of the career woman or the woman as consumer of fashion and modernity.

There were two campaigns in 1998 related to thrift, the campaign for the *Amanah Saham Wanita* (*Asnita*, Women's Shares Trust), which I discuss here, and the campaign for breastfeeding. The latter was explicitly linked to decreasing dependence on imported milk formula, and I discuss it in greater detail when looking at how women page journalists' influence within *BH* evolved over time.[78] *Wanita* Umno initiated the *Asnita* fund, launched in May 1998, though first mentioned on 16 March.[79] The fund's aim was to encourage women to save, to help alleviate the impact of the Asian Financial Crisis. From May until August 1998, there were 23 articles on *Asnita*. On 18 June, Rosmin Darus said *Wanita* Umno was being measured (though it was unclear by whom, presumably the male members of the party) by its ability to persuade women to invest in the scheme.[80] Thus, the women's pages exhaustive coverage was because *Asnita* was directly linked to the perceived capacity of *Wanita* Umno. Two articles published on 28 May 1998 illustrate the various themes that were raised by the *Asnita* articles.[81] The second paragraph of the first article talked about instilling a culture of saving. Betty Subaryati says saving is important, but not for personal economic reasons. Women were urged to invest in *Asnita* for the national economy.[82] I saw this focus in other articles on saving and thrift.[83] The article then had endorsements by leading figures within Umno, with individual benefits limited to one

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[77] As discussed by Mahathir: *The Challenge*, 91-103.
[78] See in particular "*Lebih Jimat Beri Susu Badan* (Save More with Breastmilk)," *Berita Harian*, 6 August 1998, 24.
[79] Wan Nurmawati Abdul Rani, "*Amanah Saham Wanita Dilancar April* (Asnita to Be Launched April)," *Berita Harian*, 16 March 1998, 24.
[80] Rosmin Darus, "*Ujian Kematangan Wanita Umno* (Test of Wanita Umno's Maturity)," *Berita Harian*, 18 June 1998, *Berita Wanita* 8.
[81] Betty Subaryati, "*Asnita Diyakini Boleh Dapat Sambutan Di Kelantan* (Asnita Confident of Welcome in Kelantan)," *Berita Harian*, 28 May 1998, 24; Khairana Sabtu, "*Jualan Barang Kemas Kurang Sambutan* (Gold Sales Not Popular)," *Berita Harian*, 28 May 1998, 24.
[82] On returns see "*Pulangan 13 Peratus Yakinkan Pelabut Asnita* (Returns of 13% Expected for Asnita Investors)," *Berita Harian*, 15 April 1998, 25; "*Nilai Asnita Dijangka Paling Cepat Melonjak* (Asnita Value Expected to Be Fastest Riser)," *Berita Harian*, 20 August 1998, 24.
[83] Rosmin Darus, "*Ceramah Ekonomi NCWO Kembalikan Keyakinan Wanita* (NCWO Economic Workshop Restores Women's Confidence)," *Berita Harian*, 4 March 1998, 24; Zuraida Ab Rashid, "*Peniaga Kaut Untung Berlebihan* (Businesses Gathering Excess Profit)," *Berita Harian*, 10 March 1998, *Berita Wanita* 2; Wan Nurmawati Abdul Rani and Hazirah Che Sab, "*Bekal Menjimatkan Belanja* (Packing Saves Money)," *Berita Harian*, 17 March 1998, *Berita Wanita* 4.

paragraph near the end of the article. The second article urged women to sell their gold to invest in *Asnita*. This article reads like a press release from Habib Jewellers, the official gold evaluator for *Asnita*. Thus, while gold was often the primary form of saving for low-income families, Khairana Sabtu does not validate keeping gold as an investment.[84] Saving was good, but had to be through official channels in aid of national recovery, not for personal economic resilience.[85]

In contrast to the thrift present in articles in the late 1980s, thrift in the later 1990s was portrayed as an Islamic virtue, primarily in the leader page, as in an article from June 1998.[86] The first line says humanity was at a loss (*kerugian*) except for those who have faith. The word "*kerugian*" is often used in an economic sense, such as "profit and loss", but can also mean physical harm. The article explained how a person (assumed to be male) should conduct themselves, whether in matters of proselytisation or family leadership, but about a third of the way from the end, the article discussed thrift and saving as specifically Islamic virtues, enjoined by Allah. Thrift as an Islamic virtue was implicit rather than explicit in the *Wanita* pages, but presented more often.[87] This reticence to explicitly discuss Islam was reflected by Seri Intan who said "If you're really expert [on Islam], then you write, if not, better don't."[88] Thus, thrift as an Islamic virtue was often presented through other voices. For example, on a weekly basis, the *Berita Wanita* pull-out ran an article by a reader in its *Cetusan Minda* (Bright sparks) column, prominent on the second page. While this was reader-initiated, the letters were chosen by the women's editorial team, so can be assumed to reflect the priorities and concerns among both readers and the team themselves.[89] These letters often reflected the importance of thrift as an Islamic virtue.[90]

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[84] Saidatulakmal Mohd, Nurul Syifaa Mohd Shakil, and Nur Azirah Zahida Mohamad, "Consumption-Savings Pattern of Low Income Households Towards a Sustainable Livelihood: A Gender Perspective" (paper presented at the 1st International Conference on Humanities, Social Sciences and Environment, Bali, 2016), 9.
[85] There are unspoken echoes of the Merdeka campaign here, see Fakeh, *Memoir Shamsiah Fakeh*, 36-8.
[86] Mohd Lasah Md Elah, "*Ikhlas Tonggak Segala Ibadat* (Sincerity a Pillar of Faith)," *Berita Harian*, 12 June 1998, 8. See also Ibn Salamah, "*Kroni Dan Kronisme: Isu Ketelusan*, *Ketelusan* (Crony and Cronyism: Issue of Transparency, Transparency)," *Berita Harian*, 24 June 1998, 8.
[87] E.g. Wan Nurmawati Abdul Rani, "*Isteri Perlu Tahu Pendapatan Suami* (Wives Need to Know Husband's Income)," *Berita Harian*, 19 March 1998, 22; "*RM1b Rahmat Buat Si Miskin* (RM1b Blessing for the Poor)," *Berita Harian*, 27 March 1998, 23; "*ECTC Bentuk Kualiti Peribadi* (ECTC Instils Personal Qualities)," *Berita Harian*, 20 April 1998, 22.
[88] Seri Intan, interview.
[89] Continuing a tradition from the early days of Malay journalism: Mark Emmanuel, "Viewspapers: The Malay Press of the 1930s," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 41, no. 1 (2010), 16.
[90] Wan Titihana, "*Agama, Moral Sering Dipinggirkan* (Religion, Morals Often Sidelined)," *Berita Harian*, 2 June 1998, *Berita Wanita* 2; Robiyah Ismail, "*Bertugas Dengan Jujur* (Work Honestly)," *Berita Harian*, 30 June 1998, *Berita Wanita* 2.

The women's pages in 1998, in contrast with both the editorial and Umno hierarchy, destabilised the concern with thrift by articles focused on consumerism, which only intensified due to a change in format, examined in greater detail below. This consumerism served two functions on these pages, and they evolved from the first to the second. The first was to normalise consumer goods or consumer behaviour, the second to promote or sell products. As an example, lavish spending on Western-style weddings was slowly normalised.[91] In 1987, a page was devoted to *Persiapan perkahwinan* (Wedding preparations).[92] Largely consisting of advertisements for furniture and fabric, it contained minimal editorial material, which consisted of very short stories, mainly two paragraphs in length, promoting shops or their promotions. In March 1994, another article ran with the same title.[93] This article was initiated by the promoters of a 12-day wedding exhibition. In the 1987 editorials, the requirements of a wedding were not prescribed, the focus was on what was needed for married life (furniture). In 1994, the focus was on the wedding day. The 1994 article reads as a notification, beginning with "This promoter will be holding this event here from this date to another", and goes on to give details of what will be at the exhibition.[94] Thus, while there was a shift from the focus on married life to the wedding itself, the article was short and informative, rather than prescriptive. In contrast, in 1995, Nor Aziah Sharif said the gown should be the centrepiece of a wedding, that brides should chose a gown months in advance.[95] She advised readers on the latest fashion in bridal gowns, and concurrently told them about an exhibition where they could see them. Thus, women were now being instructed on how to organise a wedding and how and what to consume, reflecting the ways in which Fatima Mernissi recalls attempts to teach Moroccan women how to use modern make-up in the mid-twentieth century.[96] In March 1996, there were three stories about weddings. One was related to the divorce of the Prince and Princess of Wales, and talked about how their lavish wedding failed to guarantee a lasting marriage.[97] It was ironic that three days later the cover story for *Berita Wanita* was *Mahkota penyeri raja sehari* (Crowning royalty for a day).[98] The article referred to the wedding day as "the most historic day in the life of the couple."[99] The first sentence read "Whenever there is a holiday, then there are wedding or engagement festivities, a normal phenomenon that can be seen in our

[91] Prefigured in Ong, *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia*, 121-31.
[92] "*Persiapan Perkahwinan* (Wedding Preparations)," *Berita Harian*, 18 November 1987, 6-7.
[93] "*Persiapan Perkahwinan* (Wedding Preparations)," *Berita Harian*, 30 March 1994, 21.
[94] "*kini menganjurkan pameran… di…mulai hari ini hingga 10 April.*"
[95] Nor Aziah Sharif, "*Gaun Bangkitkan Seri Pengantin Baru* (Gown a Sign of New Bridal Fashion)" *Berita Harian*, 4 March 1995, 22.
[96] Fatima Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass : Tales of a Harem Girlhood* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1994), 225-33.
[97] Munaarfah Abu Bakar, "*Reaksi Perceraian Puteri Wales* (Reaction to Princess of Wales' Divorce)," *Berita Harian*, 2 March 1996, 21.
[98] Munaarfah Abu Bakar, "*Mahkota Penyeri Raja Sehari* (Crowning Royalty for a Day)," *Berita Harian*, 5 March 1996, *Berita Wanita* 1.
[99] "*hari yang paling bersejarah dalam kehidupan mereka.*"

community."[100] The story, however, promoted the jewellery sold by a particular retailer, the only source quoted throughout the story. Thus, here both the style and the content have changed. While it felt and was written like an editorial piece, that only one source is used and that the source was used uncritically, meant that it read as a promotional, rather than a news, item. Unlike the 1994 article, this article provided *and* explicitly framed information. The first three paragraphs spoke about the elaborate preparations needed for a wedding, in the fourth paragraph onwards, the products being sold were discussed. Looking at the micro-level, how words were used in these stories also betrayed the consumerist orientation. "Traditional" in these stories is not Malay wedding tradtions, but Western. Thus, a "traditional" (*tradisi*) dress was white and Western. There could be various reasons for this, but perhaps a salient one is the changing norms in costume as a result of the influence of the *dakwah* movements, making the "traditional" Malay dress a site of contestation.[101] As noted by Maila Stivens in terms of body colour and ethnic origin, Western standards elide difficult questions about siting "the traditional".[102]

[100] *Apabila saja ada cuti perayaan, ada sajalah kenduri perkahwinan atau majlis mengikat tali pertunangan, satu fenomena yang biasa dilihat dalam masyarakat kita.*
[101] The dynamic around Malay weddings is also explored in Peletz, "'Ordinary Muslims" and Muslim Resurgents in Contemporary Malaysia," 245-55.
[102] Stivens, "White Babies and Global Embodiments in Malaysia and Singapore," 8.

aka 22

Gaun bangkitkan seri pengantin baru

FESYEN

leh Nor Aziah Sharif

ALAM setiap persiapan majlis perkahwinan, perara utama yang sering lifikirkan oleh pengantin ialah pakaian untuk majlis persandingan berpanding majlis jamuan meraikan perkahwinan tu.

Pemilihan pakaian antik dan sesuai sudah libuat berbulan-bulan sebelum berlangsung majlis perkahwinan yang linantikan-nantikan oleh pasangan teruna dan dara.

Bagi pengantin Melayu, pilihan utama mereka biasanya pakaian tradisional atau kurung kebaya tetapi ada juga yang memilih gaun pengantin untuk majlis persandingan sebelah malam.

Pemilihan gaun pengantin kini tidak menjadi masalah kerana beberapa kedai menyediakan perkhidmatan menyewa baju pengantin.

Dalam satu pertunjukan pakaian pengantin, *Wedding Showcase 95* baru-baru ini di Dewan Tun Dr Ismail, Pusat Dagangan Dunia Putra, beberapa kedai pengantin mempamerkan koleksi terbaru.

Gaun pengantin tidak agi semestinya berwarna putih tetapi ia kini boleh diperolehi dalam pelbagai warna seperti merah terang, merah jambu, kuning, jingga, biru, hitam selain warna klasik putih.

Pakaian yang digayakan oleh model Jazzmate Production memaparkan rekaan gaun pengantin daripada pereka fesyen terkenal.

Keseluruhan gaun itu tetap mengekalkan unsur-unsur potongan gaun kembang zaman Victoria walaupun terdapat potongan ketat yang mengikuti bentuk badan.

Hiasan yang boleh dilihat terhadap gaun pengantin itu seperti labuci dan manik bagi menambah gemerlapan pakaian pengantin untuk majlis persandingan sebelah malam.

Pemilihan warna yang tidak membosankan seperti warna merah dan kuning menjadikan pengantin kelihatan berseri.

Gaun ini menggunakan corak kuntum bunga warna merah di bahagian atas manakala bahagian bawahnya dihiasi warna kuning.

Bagi menambah keindahannya, lengan baju dihiasi renda berupa kuntum bunga warna kuning.

Hiasannya juga ringkas, seutas rantai berlian serta sarung tangan dan sudah pasti, pengantin yang menggayakan pakaian ini kelihatan lebih cantik dan menawan.

Mungkin anda mahu kelihatan lebih jelita dan mempesona pada hari yang paling bahagia dalam kehidupan anda.

Anda boleh memilih gaun warna ungu ketat. Gaun ini terbuka di bahagian bahu serta dihiasi labuci dan riben besar manakala bahagian bawahnya potongan ketat, terbelah di bahagian tengah dan dibiarkan meleret di atas lantai.

Satu lagi pakaian yang dipertunjukkan ialah gaun warna kuning terbuka di bahagian bahu. Sebelah atas baju itu, dijahit labuci putih dan hijau menjadi bentuk bunga yang ringkas tetapi tetap menawan.

Gaun polka dot warna merah jambu juga daripada koleksi terbaru membantu pengantin wanita kelihatan manis di hari berbahagianya itu.

Tidak ketinggalan, gaun putih klasik tetap disediakan bagi mereka yang tetap setiap dengan warna putih.

Ini menjadikan perkahwinan itu klasik dalam kenangan abadi pasangan itu.

LABUH... gaun seperti ini memang sesuai dipakai pengantin baru.

BERBEZA... gaun ketat memberi kelainan.

TAYANGAN

Figure 5-4: Fashion article on trends in wedding dresses.

These changes were concurrent with an increase in the amount of space devoted to fashion, make-up and advertorials. The first luxury consumption articles appeared in 1991 (which had only seven, of the month's 61 *Wanita*, articles on "luxury" consumption). By August 1998 around half of the section was dedicated to consumption, primarily of luxury goods.[103] There was no comparable shift in *Utusan*. Likewise, in October 1987, there were two articles on fashion in the *Wanita* pages, alongside a weekly sketch drawing of a design, with no promotional articles.[104] In August 1998, there were four pages of fashion coverage in the first week.[105] All of these were promotional. In the late 1980s the role of these articles included normalising the use of consumer goods, such as a pie-maker or a Western-style kitchen, but by the end of the period this pedagogical role disappears from the pages, presumably as no longer necessary.[106] The foundational importance of consumption to the women's pages and advice columns in the United States has been explored in detail by Julie Golia, who argues that it was editors' and advertisers' awareness of women's purchasing power that led to this increased space for writing women.[107] The focus on consumption in *BH* reflected trends in the growth of advertising expenditure, as captured in the chart below; and by a huge increase in the advertising team (see below).

[103] By this I mean goods such as jewellery, boutique or imported fashions, branded goods etc.
[104] Rohaya Haji Ishak, "*Fesyen Daripada Sutera Terus Memikat* (Fashion from Silk Still Alluring)," *Berita Minggu*, 18 October 1987, *Berita Wanita* 4; Norhasilah Ismail, "*Baju Labuh Menjadi Pilihan* (Long Dresses Are Choice)," *Berita Harian*, 22 October 1987, 15.
[105] Rosmin Darus, "*Musulman Mahu Teroka Pasaran Antarabangsa* (Musulman Wants to Enter International Market)," *Berita Harian*, 4 August 1998, *Berita Wanita* 5; Hazirah Che Sab, "*Padan & Suai... Muncul Kembali* (Matching & Appropriate... Coming Back)," *Berita Harian*, 4 August 1998, *Berita Wanita* 6-7; "*Produk Untuk Kulit Cerah Berseri/ Koleksi Chaumet Terus Unggul/ Cool Down Janjikan Kesegaran/ Kesempurnaan Wanita Daripada Rouge Pulp/ Acnacyl Untuk Semua* (Various Product Placements)," *Berita Harian* 4 August 1998, *Berita Wanita* 12.
[106] E.g. Salbiah Ani, "*Ruang Dapur Menyenangkan Timbulkan Minat Memasak* (Kitchen Space Makes It Easy to Foster Interest in Cooking)," *Berita Minggu*, 15 November 1987, *Berita Wanita* 12.
[107] Golia, "Courting Women, Courting Advertisers." See also Lloyd, "Women's Pages in Australian Print Media."

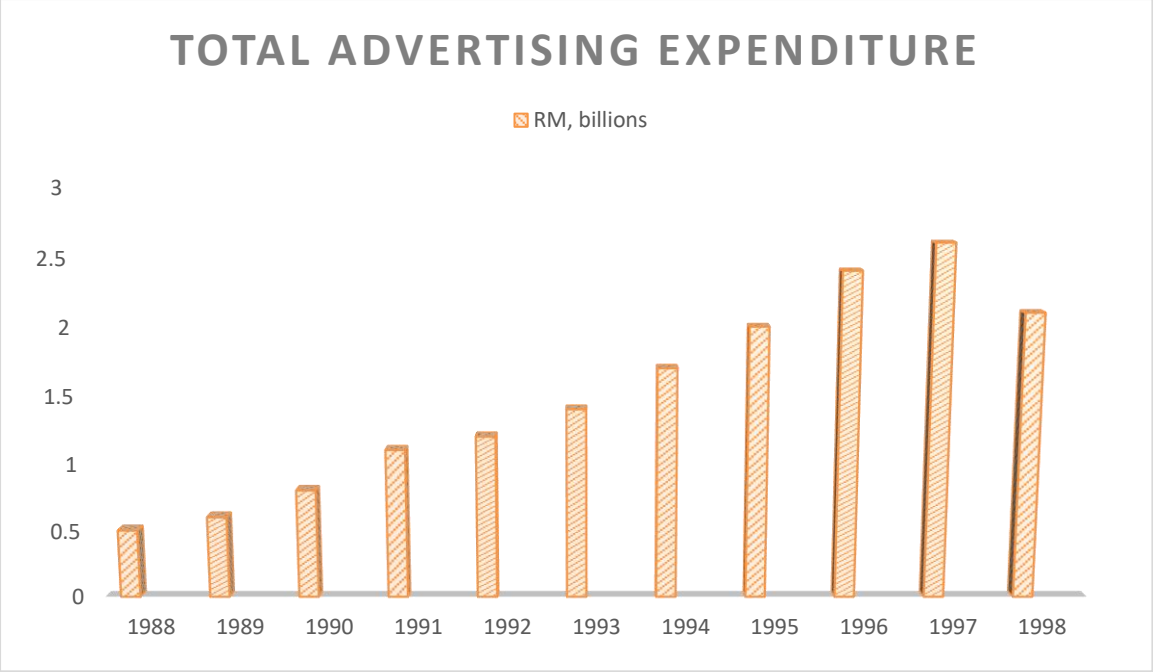

Table 5-2: Data from a report by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, Analysis of Adex Size and Trend in Malaysia (2006).

Consumption was not only directly opposed to thrift. It was also an indicator of betraying other cultural traits. Concurrently, the women's page articles framed both consumption and fashion as (desirable) symbols of modernity, even though modernity was often posited as being opposed to Islam. The *Fesyen* (Fashion) and *Menarik di pasaran* (Interesting in the market) columns both illustrate this trend. For example, in March 1998, the perfume being promoted has a "modern" (*moden*) fragrance.[108] A two-page fashion spread in June 1998 emphasised modernity, with the words *terkini* (most recent), *kontemporari* (contemporary), *pembaharuan* (renewal), *moden* (modern), funky and trendy (in English) all used.[109] Further, the artificial poses of the models, despite the captions, indicated an available femininity, starkly at odds with the norm of modesty, similar to the gendered images in advertising examined by Katharina Lindner.[110] The modernity presented in these columns was an unproblematic good, a goal to be attained.[111] As the discussion on religion above shows, both Umno and other sections of the paper framed modernity differently. Women's page writers framed consumer goods, often explicitly, as desirable because they were drawn from Western traditions or

[108] "*Allure Beri Kesegaran* (Allure Gives Freshness)," *Berita Harian*, 31 March 1998, *Berita Wanita* 7.
[109] Rosmin Darus, "*Koleksi Tamy… Untuk Wanita Berkerjaya* (Tamy Collection… for Career Women)," *Berita Harian*, 2 June 1998, *Berita Wanita* 6-7.
[110] Katharina Lindner, "Images of Women in General Interest and Fashion Magazine Advertisements from 1955 to 2002," *Sex roles* 51, no. 7 (2004), 411.
[111] This reflects the earlier moniker of the Modern Girl as explored in Alys Eve Weinbaum et al., *The Modern Girl Round the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2008).

imported from Western countries. In contrast, the Prime Minister launched a campaign to urge consumers in 1998 to "Buy Malaysian Products".[112] Thus, the government voice was less important on the women's pages than in the leader pages - the voices of advertisers were given priority. For example, on 6 March 1993, the *Fesyen* story lead said that refurbishing new jewellery was the latest Western trend, implying this was newsworthy.[113] This privileging of the interests of advertisers occurred frequently in the *Fesyen* (Fashion) and *Menarik di pasaran* (Interesting in the marketplace) columns, contrasting vividly with the portrayal of "the West" as a source of danger present in most of the rest of the *Wanita* section, and the paper more generally.[114]

Thus, there was a fundamental clash between the drive for Western-style modernity and traditionally framed cultural and civic virtues, associated with both Islam and being "Malay." While Carla Jones and various others illustrate how this tension could in some ways be overcome by Islamic consumption, that resolution was rarely drawn in the women's pages of *BH*, possibly because this solution was not proffered by the types of advertisers evident in *BH*: They were rarely offering goods styled as Islamic.[115] In *Utusan* this was, to some extent, lessened by the articles on charity. Instead *BH* writers instructed women in the virtues of "modern" consumption while simultaneously confronting consumption as alien, corrupting and endangering their identities as Malays and as Muslims. Overall, as established earlier, women were portrayed as bearers of culture and being responsible for the transmission of Islamic values to future generations. They were presented as bulwarks against the rising tide of modernity and consumerism and yet simultaneously defined by consumption, which had a disproportionate impact on vulnerable members of society, as I explore below.

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[112] "'Buy Malaysia Products' Program," Ministry of Domestic Trade, Co-operatives and Consumerism; Mahathir Mohamad, "Mastercentre Technology Park Malaysia Opening," Prime Minister's Office, 24 February 1998.
[113] Zinitulniza Abdul Kadir, "*Aksesori Antik* (Antique Accessories)," *Berita Harian*, 6 March 1993, 23.
[114] For the West as desirable, see: "*Azlina Cipta Nama Di Britain* (Azlina Built Her Name in Britain)," *Berita Harian*, 23 March 1994, 22; "*Fesyen Rambut Terbaru Vidal Sassoon* (Latest Hair Fashion from Vidal Sassoon)," *Berita Harian*, 14 March 1998, 24; Maizura Mohd Ederis, "*Tidak Perlu Dedah Untuk Seksi* (No Need to Be Revealing to Be Sexy)," *Berita Harian*, 13 January 1996, 25. On the West as source of threat see: Jamudin Idris, "*Samsuraya Tidak Gentar Hadapi Saingan Lelaki* (Samsuraya Doesn't Tremble before Male Contestants)," *Berita Harian*, 5 March 1998, 24; Khairana Sabtu and Hazirah Che Sab, "*Kewujudan Sekolah Agama Reaksi Projek Inggeris* (Religious Schools a Reaction to the English Project)," *Berita Harian*, 16 July 1998, 24; Adibah Amin, "*Nilai Semula Warisan Lama* (Renew Heritage Values)," *Berita Harian*, 3 March 1992, 22.
[115] Jones, "Materializing Piety"; Fischer, *Proper Islamic Consumption*, 155-66; Banu Gökariksel and Anna J. Secor, "New Transnational Geographies of Islamism, Capitalism and Subjectivity: The Veiling-Fashion Industry in Turkey," *Area* 41, no. 1 (2009), 6-18.

The* 'pesta seks' *in Kedah

Both in the religion pages of *BH* and elsewhere in the paper, women were often portrayed as a source of pollution, either when menstruating or because they incite male lust.[116] The exception was the women's pages, where the closest approximation to this depiction, the *Sri Siantan* weekly advice column, present throughout the period analysed, held women responsible for containing male lust because women were seen as morally superior to men rather than because they were a source of contamination as in *Utusan*.[117]

The advice column was a key part of the *BH* religion pages from the beginning of the period studied. As with *Utusan*, columns primarily addressed a male reader with the female reader primarily present and addressed in the advice column. Issues apparently raised by women include questions on appropriate covering, mingling of the sexes and occasional relationship advice.[118] These answers often reinforced the male hierarchy. For example, in a December 1987 column, agony uncle Abu Muslim told the female reader that her male relatives or male authorities had to legitimise her choice of marriage partner.[119] There were, however, limits to this imbalance not seen in *Utusan*. For example, in October 1987, a woman said that she had been raped at 13, and wanted to know, among others, whether her sin could be forgiven.[120] In contrast to *Utusan*, she was told that she had not sinned. This attitude towards women's sexual abuse was not consistent. Over time, female responsibility for managing male sexual behaviour increased, with the coverage of the so-called *pesta seks* (sex fest) in the northern state of Kedah providing a stark contrast to this advice.

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[116] E.g. "*Perbezaan Cara Solat Antara Lelaki Dan Perempuan* (Differences in the Way to Pray between Men and Women)," *Berita Minggu*, 13 December 1987, 16; "*Guru agama*", "*Ada Doa Ketika Bersetubuh?* (Are There Prayers for During Sex?)," *Berita Minggu*, 29 November 1987, 14. For a detailed study of menstrual taboos in Malaysia, see Popho E.S. Bark-Yi, *Body That Bleeds: Menstrual Politics in Malaysia* (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2007), 69-86.

[117] E.g. "Sri Siantan", "*Gara-Gara Mudahnya Percaya Janji Kahwin* (Because (She) Easily Trusted Promises of Marriage)," *Berita Harian*, 21 January 1988, 18; "Sri Siantan", "*Diam-Diam Si Gadis Jatuh Hati* (Quietly She Falls in Love)," *Berita Harian*, 16 March 1989, 13; "Sri Siantan", "*Cinta Jejaka Sekadar Nafsu* (Young Love Just Lust)," *Berita Minggu*, 5 April 1998, 13.

[118] Abu Muslim, "*Hukum Siar Gambar Tidak Menutup Aurat* (Judgement on Distributing Revealing Photo)," *Berita Minggu*, 4 October 1987, 13; "*Tidak Boleh Bersekedudukan Tanpa Nikah* (No Cohabitation before Marriage)," *Berita Minggu*, 12 March 1995, 17.

[119] Abu Muslim, "*Tidak Mahu Dinikah: Wanita Boleh Adu Ke Kadi* (Doesn't Want to Perform Marriage Ceremony: Woman Can Complain to Kadi)," *Berita Minggu*, 27 December 1987, 16.

[120] Abu Muslim, "*Gadis Ini Runsing Rahsianya Terbongkar* (Girl Worried Her Secret Will Be Revealed)," *Berita Minggu*, 18 October 1987, 13.

This *pesta* allegedly occurred in April 1998, though coverage in the sections being analysed began in May. Four girls under the age of consent were raped by 12 adult males, over an extended, undisclosed period of time. The Alor Setar Syariah Court found three of the girls guilty of close proximity (*khalwat*).[121] The word "rape" (*rogol*) was not used in any of the articles, even though the articles said the girls were under the age of consent (*bawah umur*). The coverage of this incident was extensive. In May alone there were eight articles on the issue, and coverage extended to July.[122] All articles focussed on the actions of the girls. There was protection of their privacy, required by law: The girls were given pseudonyms and their photographs were published with their faces hidden.[123] Yet, in the same article, the girls' relations with their families were reported on, at least two having run away from home. One ran away because her mother remarried. They were not going to school, but, according to the articles, spent their days smoking cannabis (*menghisap ganja*) and having sex. The moral responsibility of these girls was clear from the tone of reporting and by the court conviction, reflecting concerns raised in Parliament and echoing the fears of moral pollution expressed in Aihwa Ong's ethnography of spirit possession.[124] While the family background of the girls was repeatedly discussed, there no discussion of the family background of the young men who apparently raped the girls.[125] The girls - but not the men - were pushed to tell the authorities whether they had had sex, to the point where one of the 15-year-old girls reportedly confessed that she was "not pure" (*tidak lagi suci*) any longer.[126] A letter to the *Cetusan Minda* page on 12 May discussed the problem from the perspective of the mothers, portrayed as powerless and grief-stricken at the bad behaviour of their daughters (*Sedih melihatkan air mata seorang ibu, suri rumah yang baik*).[127] Here, there no mention of the men who raped the girls and no mention of fathers or their responsibilities. The *pesta seks* coverage provides a vivid and disturbing example of the ways in which women and girls were portrayed as responsible for the management of male lust. The consequences of this attempt to micromanage women's bodies is

[121] Alor Setar is the capital of the northern state of Kedah. "*Jaik Serius Tangani Masalah Moral* (Religious Department Serious About Tackling Moral Problems)," *Berita Harian*, 8 May 1998, 24.
[122] E.g. "*Usah Biar Anak Amalkan Cara Hidup Bebas* (Results of Letting Children Lead a Free Life)," *Berita Harian*, 9 May 1998, 24; Nooraini Darus, "*Bersama Membanteras Maksiat* (Together Tackling Vice)," *Berita Harian*, 7 July 1998, *Berita Wanita* 2.
[123] Hassan Omar, "*Pesta Seks Bukti Kehancuran Remaja* (Sex Fest Evidence of Student Ruin)," *Berita Harian*, 8 May 1998, 24.
[124] See e.g. Malaysia, *Parliamentary Debates*, Dewan Rakyat, 4 December 1995, 25-6, (Tan Yee Kew); Ong, "The Production of Possession."
[125] See also Hassan Omar, "*Tangani Gejala Pesta Seks Secara Bersama* (Handle Sex Fest Phenomenon Cooperatively)," *Berita Harian*, 9 May 1998, 24.
[126] "*Pesta Seks Bukti Kehancuran Remaja*."
[127] Rajiah Hassan, "*Sikap Remaja Kini Menyedihkan* (Youth Behaviour Today Is Distressing)," *Berita Harian*, 12 May 1998, *Berita Wanita* 2.

discussed further in Chapter Six, and the implications for both the neoliberal female *Melayu Baru* and for her reliance on development to solve her problems.

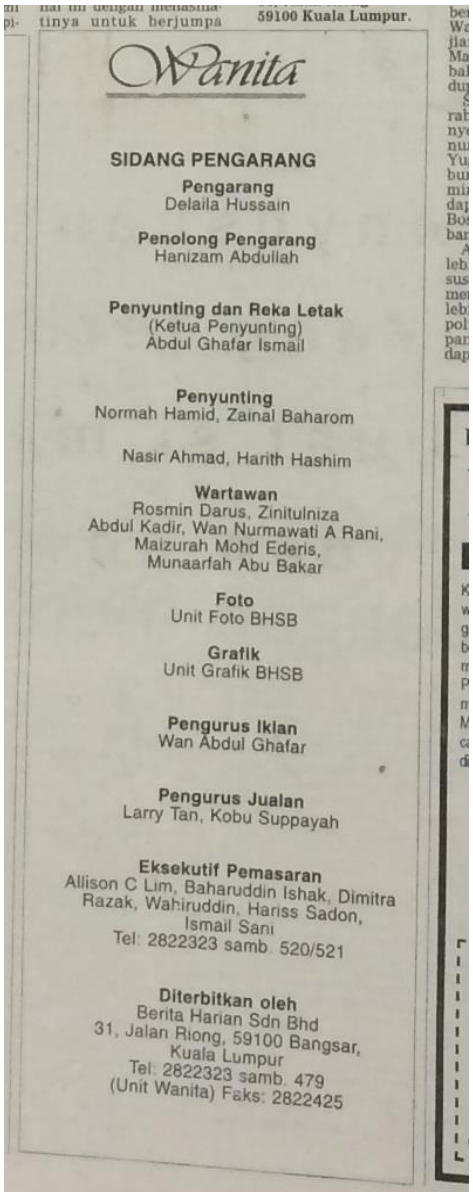
Writing outside the hierarchy: The women's desk of *Berita Harian*

Here, I examine the role of individual journalists in working against the male editorial hierarchy to create greater independence and status for the women's pages of *BH*. The role of Delaila Hussain, editor of the women's pages from 1993/4 to 1996 is key to examining how individuals could increase the scope of the women's pages. I draw extensively from the interviews with two journalists, Damia (a pseudonym) and Maizura Mohd Ederis, who worked on the pages during that period. Further, I analyse how the content on the women's pages changed over time, contrasting the periods before and after Delaila's editorship.

From 1987-93, the women's pages of *BH* mirrored the pages in *Utusan*, consisting of one page with one or two feature articles. As noted in the previous chapter, the women's pages of *Utusan* were affected by the rise of (then) Anwar protégé Johan Jaafar. The equivalent rise of A Nazri Abdullah did not have the same effect on *BH*'s women's pages. Nazri came from within the ranks of *BH* journalists, perhaps ameliorating this impact. Instead, the evolution of the women's pages in *BH* seems to have been largely influenced by commercial considerations, as evidenced by the increasing number of "features" written directly by advertisers, as well as the increasing space devoted to advertising. Women readers attracted advertising dollars, as borne out by the interviews discussed in Chapter Three and by the literature, particularly Julia Golia's study of the US women's pages between 1895 and 1930.[128] Thus, in 1993, an eight to 10 page weekly broadsheet pull-out, *Berita Wanita* (Women's News), was added. This addition had a major impact upon the women's pages in 1995 and 1996, and from its introduction provided more space for women. New columns, primarily by male contributors, meant that women journalists did not completely control this space. A number of these, such as *Soal jawab sakit puan* (Gynaecology questions and answers) and *Psikologi remaja kanak-kanak* (Psychology of youth and children), medicalised issues related to women's bodies and child-rearing, that is nonmedical problems became "defined and treated as medical problems".[129] While, the columns also

[128] Both Maizura Mohd Ederis (interviewed 13 January 2014, Taman Melawati); and Salbian Ani (2 February 2014, Bangsar) referred to the importance of content that brought in advertising revenue. Julie Annette Golia, "Advising America: Advice Columns and the Modern American Newspaper, 1895–1955" (Columbia University, 2010), 28-80.
[129] Peter Conrad, The Medicalization of Society, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 4.

provided space to discuss issues otherwise rendered invisible,[130] the women's editorial team did not retain control over all the new space. These restrictions were partly due to the unwillingness to give additional resources to this section, and the limited space could also be due to the perceived unreliability of journalists working on this section (see Chapter Three).


tinya untuk berjumpa 59100 Kuala Lumpur.

Wanita

SIDANG PENGARANG

Pengarang
Delaila Hussain

Penolong Pengarang
Hanizam Abdullah

Penyunting dan Reka Letak
(Ketua Penyunting)
Abdul Ghafar Ismail

Penyunting
Normah Hamid, Zainal Baharom

Nasir Ahmad, Harith Hashim

Wartawan
Rosmin Darus, Zinitulniza
Abdul Kadir, Wan Nurmawati A Rani,
Maizurah Mohd Ederis,
Munaarfah Abu Bakar

Foto
Unit Foto BHSB

Grafik
Unit Grafik BHSB

Pengurus Iklan
Wan Abdul Ghafar

Pengurus Jualan
Larry Tan, Kobu Suppayah

Eksekutif Pemasaran
Allison C Lim, Baharuddin Ishak, Dimitra
Razak, Wahiruddin, Hariss Sadon,
Ismail Sani
Tel: 2822323 samb. 520/521

Diterbitkan oleh
Berita Harian Sdn Bhd
31, Jalan Riong, 59100 Bangsar,
Kuala Lumpur
Tel: 2822323 samb. 479
(Unit Wanita) Faks: 2822425

Figure 5-5: Editorial team in January 1996

Under Delaila Hussain (1993-6), however, the journalists working on the women's desk struggled against these constraints to create more space for women's concerns and to give a more nuanced portrayal of women, as examined below. I will contrast this period with the periods before and after Delaila's term as editor to evaluate the lasting impact of her tenure.

Creating feminist spaces through **Berita Wanita**

Between 1993 and 1996, the *Wanita* page journalists appeared more overtly political, more engaged in a struggle against the male editorial hierarchy to create a space for women as citizens. The weekly publication of the *Berita Wanita* editorial team on page two of the supplement symbolised the attempt by Delaila Hussain to create a separate identity for the pages. The box mirrored the male editorial team published on the second page of the newspaper. No other features team was accorded this status during the period being reviewed. The greater publicity and distinct identity for the women's page journalists were part of Delaila Hussain's efforts to extend the women's pages beyond the scope of what had been traditionally assigned and give these pages a separate identity.

[130] Tasha N. Dubriwny, "Television News Coverage of Postpartum Disorders and the Politics of Medicalization," *Feminist Media Studies* 10, no. 3 (2010), 285-303; Julian Adlard, "Medical Advice Columns Give Both Good and Bad Counsel," 2000, 252.

A new column, *Pandangan Delaila* (Delaila's views), was introduced in 1993, which further indicated the new direction of the pages. This column mirrored the lead article on the leader page, providing a space for Delaila to give her views on matters of significance. In March 1995, for example, the column ran four times, and Delaila wrote on issues of non-nuclear families touching on religious imperatives, the ongoing debate on how to translate International Women's Day into Malay, and domestic workers.[131] The content of these columns was not obviously progressive, but there was no analogous column in any other subsection of the newspaper, and again marked out the women's pages as a separate sphere of expertise and comment.

Part of the change was regular editorial campaigns, such as the campaign for the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act (DVA). This campaign was emblematic of what I perceive to be the "height" of the women's pages, when the team crafted a strong editorial identity that was relatively independent of both the male hierarchy and confident enough to explore issues beyond those prescribed by *Wanita* Umno. Critical discourse analyst John Richardson examines "the campaign", as a feature by newspapers, in the context of Britain.[132] While he focuses on how campaigns position newspapers in relation to their readers, binding them on local issues, he also draws attention to how they shed light on the political position of the paper. The campaigns of the women's pages served an analogous function, but rather than binding readers to the paper itself, the campaigns positioned the women's pages within the paper. They served to differentiate the women's pages, carving out an identity distinct from the male-dominated leader pages. Thus, they played a double role, being read both by the consumers of the newspaper (the "readers"), and the male editorial hierarchy.

After a sustained campaign by the women's movement, the Malaysian Parliament passed the Domestic Violence Act 1994.[133] Subsequent to and during debates on the Act's passage, however, concerns were raised about whether the provisions were compatible with Islam.[134] Thus, on

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[131] Delaila Hussain, "*Ibu, Bapa Perlu Sokongan Moral* (Mothers, Fathers Need Moral Support)," *Berita Harian*, 7 March 1995, *Berita Wanita* 2; Delaila Hussain, "*Perempuan, Wanita Sama Saja?* (Choice of 'Woman', Is It the Same?)," *Berita Harian*, 14 March 1995, *Berita Wanita* 2; "*Pembantu Rumah Bukan Lagi Masalah Domestik*"; Delaila Hussain, "*Isu Perempuan, Wanita Beri Kesedaran* (Issue of Word Choice Raises Awareness)," *Berita Harian*, 21 March 1995, *Berita Wanita* 2.
[132] Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers*, 115-7.
[133] Passed through the lower house on 12 May 1994.
[134] See, e.g., Malaysia, *Parliamentary Debates*, Dewan Rakyat, 12 May 1994, 3163-4, (Shahidan Kassim).

International Women's Day (8 March) 1996, the Joint Action Group (JAG), which comprised a variety of women's and feminist groups, launched a campaign for the enactment of the Act.[135] Enactment (*enakmen*), the term used in the campaign, referred to the gazetting and implementation of the law. This campaign was directed at the executive, rather than the legislature, but particularly at the bureaucracy seen to be delaying bringing the law into force. Important here is that while the Act was passed by the *BN* with support from the opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP), there were sections within the ruling coalition who maintained serious doubts about the law - and the Prime Minister himself did not take a public stand either supporting or opposing the law. He was, for example, absent during the debate on the Bill in Parliament.[136] The leadership vacuum created the conditions for civil society action, and independence on the part of the women's desk journalists.[137] In June 1996, the Act was gazetted and implemented.

Domestic violence was first mentioned in the Sri Siantan advice column of 23 March 1990, prior to Delaila Hussain's leadership.[138] The letter-writer said her husband liked to beat her, that she didn't want to sleep with him, and asked what to do. As the title suggests, the agony aunt Sri Siantan advised her to look to herself and examine the reasons why her husband behaved in this manner. Thus, there was no indication of domestic violence as a gendered issue, about power, nor that it was a crime that needed to be addressed (which it was not at this point).

From 1993, when Delaila took over the reins, the coverage of the DVA became positive and domestic violence was portrayed negatively. Thus, the next mention of the DVA in the pages analysed is on 15 March 1993, taking a feminist perspective and interviewing the Women's Aid Organisation (WAO), pushing for the passage of the Act.[139] While this was a long article, solely given over to feminist voices, it was isolated, and the journalists did not run a sustained campaign within the paper to support the passage of the Act through Parliament. Only in 1996, three years after both Houses of Parliament had

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[135] Information on the law and the campaign available at http://www.wao.org.my/Domestic+Violence_98_5_1.htm, accessed 26 July 2017.
[136] As seen in Malaysia, *Parliamentary Debates*, Dewan Rakyat, 12 May 1994, 3154-214.
[137] For more detail on the campaign and the law, see Siraj, "Women and the Law"; Ariffin, "Feminism in Malaysia"; Lai, "The Women's Movement in Peninsular Malaysia"; Cecilia Ng, Maznah Mohamad, and tan beng hui, *Feminism and the Women's Movement in Malaysia: An Unsung (R)Evolution* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2006), 52-7.
[138] "Sri Siantan", "*Jangan Terburu Menghukum Suami* (Don't Be Too Quick to Judge Your Husband)," *Berita Harian*, 23 March 1990, 18.
[139] Kartini Noor, "*Lulus Segera Akta Lindungi Isteri* (Urgently Pass Act to Protect Wives)," *Berita Harian*, 15 March 1993, 25.

passed the Bill, was there a sustained campaign in the women's pages for the DVA to be gazetted and brought into force. I argue below that changes within the women's desk were important. The DVA enactment campaign coverage in the *BH* women's pages was overwhelmingly supportive, and coverage was comprehensive. There was a total of 11 articles on this campaign, and all but one favoured the law being enacted and brought into force. The first mention of the need to bring the DVA into force was a "crystal ball" article on what 1996 was likely to bring.[140] The first half of the article portrayed a neoliberal "Malay woman", in line with the Malaysian government's rhetoric (if not practice), focusing on self-reliance, determination and taking advantage of opportunities.[141] About a third of the article was given over to two interviewees who discuss the importance of implementing the DVA. Of these two, the last, Kamalia Ibrahim, was from the Umno's Women's Division's Legal Bureau (*Biro Undang-Undang Wanita* Umno Malaysia). The positioning of Kamilia is telling. Despite being from Umno, she was given last mention in the article, while a spokeswoman from a welfare organisation was given first mention – an inversion of the usual order of precedence. Drawing on the subsequent coverage and my interviews, it seems likely that an editorial decision was taken that coverage of the DVA was important. The women's desk reporters were constrained by the male hierarchy within the newspaper. Negotiation between the editor of the women's pages and the (male) editors affected how feminist issues could be framed, as shown by Bernadette Barker-Plummer in the context of the US women's movement.[142] Thus, by placing the comments to the end of the article, but in the mouth of a senior *Wanita* Umno figure, the issue could be given significant space. This article was followed the next day by a retrospective article, looking at 1995 in the context of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing.[143] Malaysia was represented by the Prime Minister's wife, Siti Hasmah Ali, who drew attention to poverty, the importance of the family and the depredations of war, that is of enabling, or disabling, factors for women's equality, rather than women's human rights.[144] This article, however, began with nationalist, neoliberal womanhood. The broken promises surrounding the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act, dating back to January 1995, were given prominence immediately after these nationalist constructions. Thus, in contrast to Siti Hasmah's speech, the article focused on women's human rights. Further, the focus on empowerment contrasted

[140] Wan Nurmawati Abdul Rani, Zinitulniza Abdul Kadir, and Munaarfah Abu Bakar, "*Tahun Pembakar Semangat* (New Year Inspiration)," *Berita Harian*, 1 January 1996, *Berita Wanita* 1.
[141] This was discussed in Parliament in relation to single mothers, e.g., Malaysia, *Parliamentary Debates*, Dewan Rakyat, 21 April 1994, 994-5 (Yang Khoon Seng).
[142] Barker-Plummer, "News and Feminism."
[143] Delaila Hussain, "*Mengimbau 1995* (The Call of 1995)," *Berita Harian*, 2 January 1996, *Berita Wanita* 1.
[144] Siti Hasmah Ali, "Speech at the Plenary of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women," Prime Minister's Office, 6 September 1995.

with the personality-based reporting that dominated news at the time of the conference.[145] In these articles, ministers from *Wanita* Umno blamed bureaucrats for the delays in implementing the DVA. Thus, the part of the article dealing with the DVA enactment began with the views espoused by the two ministers, both of whom had said that the Act was in the process of being implemented. The section of the article on the DVA ended with "Prior to this, Malaysian women waited ten years before the act was passed in 1994."[146] This sentence had two functions. First, it framed the DVA as the result of the actions of all Malaysian women, rather than the much smaller segment of Malaysian women active in the women's movement. Thus, the DVA's support was implicitly broadened, and the campaign given greater support than it possessed. Second, it drew attention to the length of time that women had "waited" for the passage of the Act. Rather than fighting or campaigning, women waited. This choice of phrase portrayed women as patient, in accordance with gender stereotypes and in particular, in accordance with how *Wanita* Umno was perceived to be an auxiliary, rather than equal partner, to the male politicians within the party.[147] In this much longer article, the three paragraphs on the DVA comprised less than a quarter of the total, though the article ended with a sentence reiterating the hope that the DVA would be enacted that year. The support for the DVA was not explicitly from the women's desk journalists, but neither was it espoused by the women's movement. Rather, it came from Umno politicians, while prominent Malaysian feminist groups were given the more trivial issue of how the phrase "International Women's Day" should be rendered in Malay. Women's desk journalists thus chose to increase the legitimacy of the campaign for the enactment of the DVA. This choice shows how the journalists manoeuvred to bolster their position not only with the readers of these articles, but also with the male editorial hierarchy.

The women's pages next covered the 8 March launch of the implementation campaign by JAG, which was completely ignored by *Utusan*. The coverage said there was no reason for the law to differentiate between Muslims and non-Muslims, the major point of contention in debates leading up to, and after, the Bill's passage through Parliament.[148] The most notable feature here was that Maizura, covering the launch, cited three people (including an unnamed activist) from the launch itself. She also cited a minister, Zaleha Ismail, as saying there was conflict (*percanggahan*) between civil and Syariah law on

[145] See also Faridah Ibrahim and Rahmah Hashim, "Images of Women and Human Rights: A Content Analysis of Malaysian Media During the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing," *Jurnal Komunikasi* 12 (1996), 76.
[146] *Sebelum ini, wanita Malaysia menunggu selama 10 tahun sebelum akta berkenaan digubal pada 1994.*
[147] See, Dancz, "Women's Auxiliaries and Party Politics in Western Malaysia," 400-09; Manderson, "The Shaping of the Kaum Ibu."
[148] Maizura Mohd Ederis, "*Jag Berpiket Desak Zaleha* (Jag Pickets Zaleha)," *Berita Harian*, 9 March 1996, 24.

this issue. Maizura sought a response from *Pusat Islam*, the government's touchstone for Islamic policy, to refute the minister's assertion. Thus, she was pro-active in defusing the government minister. The refutation of a minister happens rarely anywhere in the paper, and this was the only instance I saw in the women's pages. While seeking a refutation paralleled the (low) status of the minister in question, it also reflected the importance that Maizura placed on supporting the enactment of the DVA. The next story of note ran on 26 March 1996. *Berita Wanita* carried a front page article relating stories of women who had suffered from domestic violence.[149] While the article contained very little comment, it told the stories of five women of different racial backgrounds, who had each suffered gender-based violence and who were living in shelters. Covering two pages, it was implicitly advocating for the enforcement of a domestic violence law. While the voices of women identifying as feminists were not heard, the journalist must have visited and co-operated with a shelter for domestic violence victims. Together these stories show that the coverage of the DVA campaign was ongoing, which was unusual and possibly even unique in the context of campaigns by human-rights based non-governmental organisations in Malaysia. Human-rights based organisations were more commonly demonised as being funded and controlled by Westerners, often framed as an essentialist discourse of human rights opposed to "Asian values".[150] Further, various reporters assigned to the women's desk wrote on the DVA. Thus, the articles in *BH* were part of an ongoing effort to draw attention to this campaign, which will be contrasted with subsequent campaigns below.[151]

As mentioned earlier, government ambivalence on the issue of the DVA enabled this coverage. They had allowed the law to be passed, but were stalling on its implementation.[152] The campaign for implementation was outside the realm of party politics, so comparatively safe for the paper to cover. Nonetheless, there were limits to how far the issue was given a feminist framing, which become clear when the articles are analysed through the lens of journalism conventions, particularly the pyramidal

[149] Rosmin Darus, "*Mangsa Suami Ganas* (Victims of Violent Husbands)," *Berita Harian*, 26 March 1996, *Berita Wanita* 1.
[150] See, e.g. "*Negara Kaya: Usah Ajar Itik Berenang* (Rich Nations: Teaching Ducks to Swim)," *Berita Harian*, 10 March 1995, 10; Roslan Hamid, "*Kebangkitan Islam Bimbangkan Barat* (Islamic Awakening Worries the West)," *Berita Harian*, 17 March 1992, 10; Abdurrahman Haqqi, "'*Masyarakat Antarabangsa' Definisi Barat* ('International Community' Defined by the West)," *Berita Harian*, 12 June 1998, 10. Also see Paivi Koskinen, "'Asian Values', Gender and Culture-Specific Development," ed. Damien Kingsbury and Leena Avonius, *Human rights in Asia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 159-81.
[151] The only two respondents who mentioned writing about and working with feminist organisations (Maizura Mohd Ederis and Seri Intan Othman) also wrote for the women's pages during this time.
[152] Malaysia, *Parliamentary Debates*, Dewan Rakyat, 9 December 1993, 11376-8.

news structure.[153] Although feminist and WAO executive director Ivy Josiah was cited in the article on 9 March, she was only cited this once, at the end of the article, which, according to the pyramid structure, is the least important place where the paragraphs are most likely to be cut. This positioning could have been because the journalist thought Josiah's views insignificant, or because the journalist thought that they would be less likely to face scrutiny or censorship if placed at the end of the article. Government censorship was not, however, a factor in the coverage of the enactment of the DVA. This lack of censorship was referenced by Maizura, who wrote the 9 March story, who said: "(on) domestic violence, because in this case... opposition and government work together. … so I can give fair reporting."[154] Nonetheless, both this interview and the interviews with Maizura's colleague Damia showed that pressure was brought by the male editorial hierarchy when feminist issues (such as polygyny) were raised, so the male hierarchy was more likely to be the target of these considerations, rather than politicians.

The one article opposing the enactment of the DVA focused on Islamic Family Law (IFL). In the article, female academics argued that the provisions for the protection of women under IFL were greater than those under the DVA, as they included mental as well as physical violence. Here, the journalist framed the arguments presented carefully, particularly in regard to a commonly cited Qu'ranic verse that appears to give husbands the power to beat their wives if their wives are "disobedient" (*nusyuz*).[155] The interpretation she gave to this verse was that this beating had to be symbolic in nature, carried out with something soft like a piece of cloth, a reading promoted by the feminist organisation Sisters in Islam.[156] More than a third of the article was given to this alternative feminist reading of the Qu'ran. In contrast, in *Utusan* only one article was published on the women's pages throughout the enactment campaign, and it did not mention the women's movement.[157]

There was also sporadic coverage of the DVA after it was brought into force. In 1998, there were three stories. The first was primarily on the rise in the number of cases of domestic violence since the

[153] The news structure is discussed in John Maxwell Hamilton and Heidi J. S. Tworek, "The Natural History of the News: An Epigenetic Study," *Journalism* 18, no. 4 (2017), 395-6.
[154] Maizura, interview.
[155] Surah Al-Nisa (The Women), 4-34, which reads in part "As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next) refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly)", Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text and Translation* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 1994), 75.
[156] Sisters In Islam, *Are Muslim Men Allowed to Beat Their Wives?* (Petaling Jaya, 1991), 8-13.
[157] Wan Norazah Wan Chik, "*Dera: Masyarakat Semakin Sedar* (Abuse: Society Increasingly Aware)," *Utusan Malaysia*, 8 April 1996, 22.

enactment of the DVA, alluding to its ineffectiveness, rather than either more women reporting domestic violence or due to problems in implementation.[158] It ended by urging adult male victims of domestic violence to come forward, a theme which came up during the Parliamentary debates on domestic violence, echoing the debates on DV's "gender symmetry" explored and largely refuted by Michael Kimmel.[159] The second article was "straight" reporting of a press conference on the need to strengthen the DVA, held by WAO.[160] This article featured feminist voices, to the exclusion of all others, but there was no ownership of the issue taken on by the women's pages editorial team, and considering previous and subsequent coverage, this could be seen as a distancing from the issue. The final article was primarily on how cases had been resolved, by wives returning to their abusive spouses, through the assistance of the government.[161] It implied that the shortcomings of the Act were a failure of the feminist movement, and that through government-mediated conflict resolution at the "family level" (*peringkat keluarga*), there would be no need for such legislation. This article was not written by a reporter assigned to the women's desk, which in turn shows that the issue of the DVA was no longer considered as important as it had been during 1996. From being an apparently central concern of the women's editorial team, coverage was moved to men outside the desk.

The women's pages from 1993-1996 under the leadership of Delaila were marked by activism by the journalists assigned to this desk. The women carved out a distinct identity for themselves, both through stylistic elements (the table showing the women's desk team), and through using the pages to conduct campaigns that differentiated these pages from the rest of the paper. Next, I show how from 1997 onwards, this space was not maintained, but that this period left a legacy in terms of this distinct identity of the women's desk.

Shrinking spaces: The women's desk during the Asian financial crisis

Delaila and most of her campaigning team of writers, including Maizura and Damia, left the newspaper in 1996: Maizura, in particular, discussed how the team's reporting of the glass ceiling mirrored

[158] Jami'ah Shukri, "*Kes Dera Isteri Kian Meningkat* (Wife Abuse Cases Going up)," *Berita Harian*, 15 June 1998, 24.
[159] E.g. Malaysia, *Parliamentary Debates*, Dewan Rakyat, 9 December 1993, 11376-7, (Yong Khoon Seng); Michael Kimmel, "'Gender Symmetry' in Domestic Violence: A Substantive and Methodological Research Review," 2002, 1332-63.
[160] Rosmin Darus, "*Akta Lindungi Wanita Boleh Diperkemas: WAO* (Women's Protection Act Could Be Streamlined: WAO)," *Berita Harian*, 3 July 1998, 24.
[161] Nasir Hassan, "*Hawa Sedia Membantu* (Hawa Is Ready to Help)," *Berita Harian*, 4 August 1998, *Berita Wanita* 10.

Delaila's own career, that from the women's pages, there was no clear career trajectory to rise through the newspaper's editorial hierarchy.[162] After they left, the women's pages underwent another transformation. This change was particularly evident in the daily *Wanita* pages, rather than *Berita Wanita*. These pages became more like a news, rather than a longer-style features, section within the paper. The result was more and shorter stories, which in turn had an impact upon the types of stories written. These changes had implications for the autonomy of the journalists on the women's desk, and for the ways in which they were able to carry out campaigns. In March 1997, there were only three reporters, and no editor, working on the women's pages, judging from the editorial team credited weekly in *Berita Wanita*. While the journalists were joined by an editor and sub-editor by March 1998, the number of journalists did not reach parity with the period between 1993 and 1996.[163] These journalists had to produce more stories, so there was more reliance on press release material, though initially this was balanced with wire stories. For example, on 6 May 1998, a reasonably typical day chosen at random, the *Wanita* section ran seven stories, of which only one had a byline.[164] Of the other six articles, one reads like a press release for a type of medication, another is a promotion for furniture and a third is notice of an upcoming event.[165] The remaining two articles are an article on women's support for the government, and a government measure to assist single mothers.[166] While this shift to more press release articles was taking place internationally (examined in the context of the UK by Justin Lewis et al), there was little change in *Utusan*.[167] Thus, in the context of Malay-language newspapers, the change was both significant and localised to *BH*. Nonetheless, in 1998, the newspaper again engaged in campaigns of a broadly feminist nature. Here, I look at the two major campaigns, first the campaign for 30 percent of decision-making positions to be filled by women, and, second, a campaign to promote breastfeeding.

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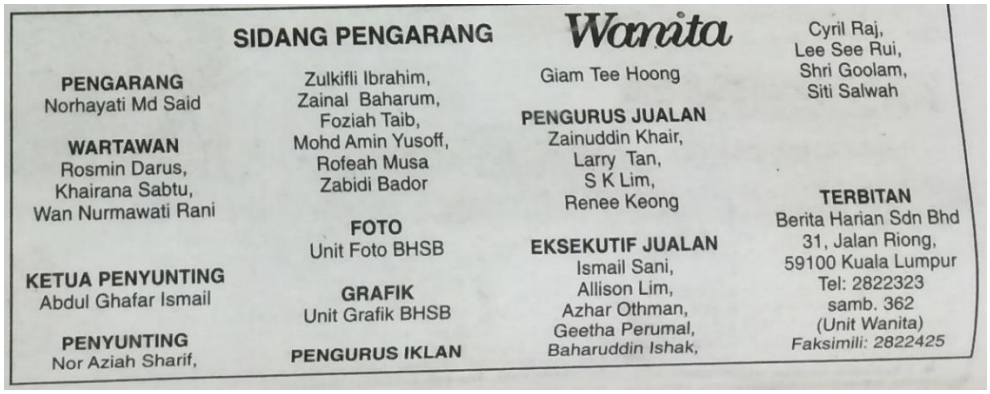
[162] See Chapter Three; Maizura, interview.
[163] The advertising sales team, in contrast, increased, from two to 10 people, see *Berita Wanita* 18 March 1997, 2.
[164] Rosmin Darus, "*Asnita Beri Pinjaman Untuk Anak Pelabur* (Asnita Gives Loans for Investor's Children)," *Berita Harian*, 6 May 1998, 24.
[165] "*Zinaxin Boleh Redakan Sakit Artritis, Reumatisme* (Zinaxin Can Relieve Pain from Arthritis, Rheumatism)," *Berita Harian*, 6 May 1998, 24; "*Ikea Galak Guna Barang Tempatan* (Ikea Promotes Using Local Products)," *Berita Harian*, 6 May 1998, 24; "*Persatuan Chef Anjur Makan Malam* (Chef's Association to Hold Dinner)," *Berita Harian*, 6 May 1998, 24.
[166] "*Wanita BN Sokong Usaha Tangani Kegawatan* (BN Women Support Moves to Handle Crisis)," *Berita Harian*, 6 May 1998, 24; "*Baitulmal Mahu Timbang Pemohonan Ibu Tunggal* (Baitulmal Wants Balance for Single Mothers)," *Berita Harian*, 6 May 1998, 24.
[167] Lewis, Williams, and Franklin, "A Compromised Fourth Estate?". On the impact of commercialism elsewhere see also Bennett, Gressett, and Haltom, "Repairing the News"; Philip Gaunt and David Pritchard, "Outside over National News Agencies? A Study of Preferences in the French Regional Press," *Journalism Quarterly*, no. 1 (1990), 184-9.



SIDANG PENGARANG

Wanita

PENGARANG
Norhayati Md Said

WARTAWAN
Rosmin Darus,
Khairana Sabtu,
Wan Nurmawati Rani

KETUA PENYUNTING
Abdul Ghafar Ismail

PENYUNTING
Nor Aziah Sharif,
Zulkifli Ibrahim,
Zainal Baharum,
Foziah Taib,
Mohd Amin Yusoff,
Rofeah Musa
Zabidi Bador

FOTO
Unit Foto BHSB

GRAFIK
Unit Grafik BHSB

PENGURUS IKLAN
Giam Tee Hoong

PENGURUS JUALAN
Zainuddin Khair,
Larry Tan,
S K Lim,
Renee Keong

EKSEKUTIF JUALAN
Ismail Sani,
Allison Lim,
Azhar Othman,
Geetha Perumal,
Baharuddin Ishak,
Cyril Raj,
Lee See Rui,
Shri Goolam,
Siti Salwah

TERBITAN
Berita Harian Sdn Bhd
31, Jalan Riong,
59100 Kuala Lumpur
Tel: 2822323
samb. 362
(Unit Wanita)
Faksimili: 2822425

Figure 5-6: Editorial team in March 1998. In 1996 (Fig. 5-4), there were 7 reporters, four sub-editors and 7 sales and marketing staff; in 1998 there were 4 reporters, 8 sub-editors and 14 sales and marketing staff.

From March to July 1998, the *Wanita* desk ran 14 articles in support of the campaign for gender parity in decision-making. All voices reported were in favour of the gender parity campaign, in contrast to the campaign for the DVA above. Articles reported the issue as being first mooted by the government, though it had been on the agenda for feminist groups and the *Wanita* Umno.[168] Thus, in contrast to the DVA campaign, this story started within government: Though the gender parity campaign was framed in terms that could be perceived as feminist, and if achieved would have helped improved the representation of women, male decision-makers in the government set the agenda. The coverage thus lacked the tensions that arose in the coverage of the DVA enactment, presented as the agenda of female politicians and led by feminist women's groups. Likewise, the 1998 campaign to promote breast-feeding followed the agenda of male politicians, to decrease reliance on imported goods. Unlike the gender parity articles, *BH* had a history of promoting breastfeeding in the women's pages, running sporadic articles on the issue throughout the period examined.[169] From March to August 1998, there was an unprecedented nine articles published on breastfeeding. An article from July 1998 read "Women who breastfeed do not need to spend large amounts of money, but the impact is huge, with benefits for the family, the community and the nation especially from an economic perspective."[170] Rather than a focus on health, of either mother or child, the major focus in all the stories was on the economic benefit, supported by the assertion that breastfeeding was Islamic. This slant complemented stories on both the leader page and elsewhere in the women's pages on the need for

[168] Patimah Ramli, "*Sasaran 30 Peratus Wanita Buat Dasar 2005* (30 Percent Women Target Policy for 2005)," *Berita Harian*, 28 March 1998, 23.
[169] E.g. "*Seksual Wanita Selepas Bersalin* (Women's Sexuality after Giving Birth)," *Berita Harian*, 16 March 1993, *Berita Wanita* 2.
[170] "*Wanita yang menyusukan bayi tidak perlu mengeluarkan belanja yang tinggi tetapi kesannya amat besar untuk faedah keluarga, masyarakat dan negara terutama dari segi ekonomi.*" Hazirah Che Sab, "*Penyusuan Ibu Dapat Jimat Pertukaran Wang* (Mother's Milk Can Save on Currency Exchanges)," *Berita Harian*, 30 July 1998, 24.

thrift during the economic crisis. The male hierarchy, editorial or political, initiated the breastfeeding campaign.

In summary, between 1993 and 1996 the *BH* women's pages experienced an expansionist period. Several innovations took place: First, the women's editorial team created a coherent identity. Rather than being just another section of the paper, they presented themselves to the reader as a separate team, with an apparently independent editorial policy. Second, the team engaged in more investigative and sustained campaigns on issues that were not initiated by either the internal male editorial or external government hierarchies. The ability to defend and expand this space required finesse, as shown in the space given to the female opponents of the DVA. Ultimately, however, Delaila was unable maintain this space, and by March 1997, this pioneer spirit had been defused. The women's pages of 1997 did not have an editor, and they appeared to be in a state of limbo, and even when there was new editorial leadership, they did not have the same campaigning confidence. There was no equivalent to the *Pandangan Delaila* (Delaila's views) editorial space, for example. It would be hasty to claim that this was only due to reaction against the activist efforts of Delaila and her cohort. External factors, such as the economic crisis and the increasing perception of the importance of the Malay female voter as a bulwark against Pas, for example, may have contributed to this shift. Nonetheless, women writers were not passive pawns of the male hierarchy, but chose campaigns that drew on Umno's rhetoric and campaigns, rather than those initiated outside official sources. The "activist" period showed lasting gains in terms of the resources allocated to the women's pages and retained some of the political gains, but the experiment in carving out a distinctive editorial voice for the women's pages, and particularly their editor, stalled by 1998. This trajectory showed both the possibilities of, and limits to, the efforts of an individual, with a supportive team, in (however indirectly) challenging the male editorial hierarchy.

Conclusion

This chapter addresses three key parts of my argument. First, the chapter illustrates the contest over resources within *Berita Harian*, with the women's pages acting as a paper-within-a-paper. Editors of the women's pages could exercise a high degree of autonomy over the women's pages, but only if external conditions were favourable. In times of political and economic stress, there was less room for autonomy across the paper, and this was also felt in the women's pages. Thus, as with the previous two chapters, this chapter shows that the newspaper was not a monolithic entity.

The second key part of my argument is that the women's pages in this period were disadvantaged in this contest for official resources. This disadvantage also meant that "unauthorised" voices, those who did not "know" where the line between appropriate and inappropriate stories lay, worked on the women's pages. Thus, these pages experienced disproportionate censorship because the journalists within the pages pushed against the boundaries of politically acceptable reporting. Further, the women writing on the women's pages of *BH* were more aware of discrimination, partly due to the greater impact of the processes of generational change: The women's pages remained dominated by first generation journalists in *Utusan*, while the women in charge of *BH*'s women's pages were from the second or third generations.

The difference between the party political nature of the malestream pages and the apolitical depiction of women's issues was illustrated in detail through the DVA campaign. Nonetheless, this chapter tells the story of three different "women". The female *Melayu Baru* was entrepreneurial and economically independent, pursuing a career and managing the demands of family life through self-management. Second, the bearer of culture and identity was vulnerable to desecration while also policing the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Third, the journalist working on the women's pages struggled to carve out and maintain a space for women readers and journalists in the face of a male editorial hierarchy that perceived women, and their spaces, as being of limited or secondary importance. The differences between how these women worked and were portrayed on the leader and religion pages, and the way they were portrayed and worked on the women's pages is indicative of the "authorised" malestream, hegemonic version of a Malay-identifying woman and the same woman alternatively imagined. Thus, each of these "women" presents problems for the ways in which Umno constructed itself as the natural party of government, particularly as the natural party of government for the Malays.

Chapter Six: Umno, editors and the women's page journalists

> "When I was in general (desk), I don't think I can do (investigative reporting), but in women, I got a lot of opportunity."
>
> - Maizura Mohd Ederis (*BH*, 1993-1996)[1]

Maizura's reflection that the women's pages allowed women to undertake investigative reporting has been borne out by the critical discourse analysis of the previous two chapters. This chapter ties together threads of Chapters Three to Five and asks how far the influence of Umno extended in the women's pages. I argue that the gap between depictions of women on the malestream and women's pages indicates that party political influence was weaker on the women's pages. The women's page journalists used party political rhetoric, focussed on issues not seen as important to party political contests, and drew upon codes of ethics to progress an agenda that they defined as being in the interests of their female readers, whether the middle- to upper-class women of *BH* or the working class women of *Utusan*, rather than in the interests of the Umno.

In the first section of this chapter, I explore the constraints and opportunities that women's page journalists perceived that they faced, and how these differed from the malestream experience. The distinct perceptions women's page journalists had of their role had consequences for both their careers and the ways they worked as journalists. This section draws primarily on the oral histories presented in Chapter Three. Next, I examine how this different perception of their role affected the women's pages, directly or indirectly. This section studies constraints that were internal to the women's pages, such as turnover of journalists, as well as those external to the pages, such as the political environment. I suggest conditions that influenced the writing of the Malay-Muslim woman by showing how these changed over the time period examined in this thesis. Lastly, I examine the key tensions that mark how women were written about and the resolutions proposed, paying attention to the political environment and how these portrayals complemented and/ or differed from the official and malestream imagining of women's role(s) in society.

[1] Interview on 13 January 2014, Taman Melawati.

Writing for women: Contrasting the missions of women's page and malestream women journalists

Here, I examine how the women journalists' perception of their role as journalists impacted upon the content and evolution of the women's pages. Research into the role of women in the newsroom has recently been enriched with discussions of both gender and role performativity, that is how women perform gender in the newsroom and its implications in combination with how journalists construct themselves as journalists through "strategic rituals", such as objectivity, building on work such as Gaye Tuchman's classic ethnography from 1973.[2] This literature forces us to think in greater depth about the concept of the "College of Osmosis" as a method of learning news values, as mentioned by Times editor Harold Evans.[3] In this section, I am interested in the differences in how women journalists perceived their roles, depending on where they were situated within the newsroom hierarchy. In doing so, I build on this literature and show the complexity of performing both gender and professional roles in the newsroom. As noted in Chapter Three, women's page journalists often defined their role in terms of their reader and their readers' benefit. In contrast, journalists who wrote for the malestream pages defined their role in terms of the government agenda. These differences could be overstated, as there were similarities. In particular, the pedagogical role of journalists was important to most respondents. For example, *BH*'s Jamhariah Jaafar said the role of journalists in society was to "make them realise the things that are happening around them, and what is the true stories."[4] They tended to see themselves as better educated and able to direct or lead their readers. None saw their role in terms, for example, of being a watch dog on behalf of their readers or playing a role in cultivating a democratic citizenry, key roles for the media as discussed, for instance, by Clifford Christians et al.[5] Nonetheless, this difference in perceived role between women's page and malestream journalists explains several commonalities evident in the women's pages in both newspapers.

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[2] Gaye Tuchman, "The Technology of Objectivity: Doing 'Objective' TV News Film." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 2 (1973), 3-26. See also Bogaerts, "On the Performativitiy of Journalistic Identity"; Jenkins and Finneman, "Gender Trouble in the Workplace".

[3] Harold Evans, *Essential English for journalists, editors and writers*, (London: Pimlico, 2000), 3 cited in O'Neill and Harcup, "News Values and Selectivity", 162.

[4] Jamhariah Jaafar interviewed 27 March 2014, Bangsar.

[5] Clifford Christians et al., Normative Theories of the Media: Public Communication in a Democratic Society, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009). See also Michael Schudson, "Four Approaches to the Sociology of News Revisited," in *Media and Society*, ed. James Curran (London; New York: Bloomberg, 2010), 164-85.

Women's page journalists perceived themselves as being constrained by the malestream hierarchy who did not understand the needs of female readers. *Utusan*'s Maimunah Yusof, for instance, argued for the right to use the term "*ibu tunggal*" (single mother) for women who had been divorced or abandoned, rather than the perjorative term "*janda*" (widow), which in Malay has connotations of being a lustful husband-stealer.[6] In relation to her use of the term, Maimunah said, "the women accept it. I don't care what the men, in *Utusan* especially, do".[7] She put the single mothers ahead of the prejudice of the malestream hierarchy. Maimunah framed her role as helping these women learn self-respect: "I would tell them, you are *ibu tunggal*, you are the one who is very good, your husband is no good."[8] In contrast, *Utusan*'s Rosnah Majid said her role as a leader writer was to "give advice to the government".[9] Though she resisted the influence of deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim (1993-1998) in the newsroom, she phrased her resistance as a personal battle between herself and his appointee Johan Jaafar: "Every month, we fight. I know he is an Anwar group, I don't belong in any group." Thus, she was not struggling against male editors in general, but against one man in particular. Further, she did not see this struggle as constraining her action, but as evidence of her freedom and independence. She was a representative of *Utusan*, compared to Johan who was a representative of a single man within Umno. These contests within Malaysian newsrooms have received little attention in the literature, as yet. The discussion of these contests below builds on Dan Berkowitz's exposition of journalism as defined by sacred rituals, such as attendance to objectivity, which help to conceal the ideological nature of the profession.[10] Below, I will further interrogate these ideological dimensions and how they played out between the malestream hierarchy and the women's pages.

The malestream editorial hierarchy served as a constraint due to the differences between how women were portrayed on the malestream leader and religion pages, in comparison to the women's pages. Leader and religion page writers rarely wrote about women, so it is important to pay close attention to the times when they surfaced.[11] As noted in Chapter Four, "woman" as depicted in the leader pages of *Utusan* moved from autonomous beings endowed with rights, to beings defined by their relations

[6] *Indonesia and The Malay World* had a special issue on *janda* in 2016, focusing on Indonesia, discussing the stigma of being *janda* in different contexts, as well as the strategies used by women to overcome this stigma. See, e.g., Lyn Parker, "The Theory and Context of the Stigmatisation of Widows and Divorcees (Janda) in Indonesia." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 44, no. 128 (2016), 7-26.
[7] Maimunah Yusof interviewed 23 February 2014, Taman Baru Ampang.
[8] Maimunah, interview.
[9] Rosnah Majid interviewed 18 February 2014, Kuala Lumpur.
[10] Berkowitz and Eko, "Blasphemy as Sacred Rite/ Right."
[11] This absence is universal. See Harp, Bachmann, and Loke, "Where Are the Women?," 293-5; WACC, "Who Makes the News?," ed. World Association of Christian Communication (London: World Association of Christian Communication, 2010), vii; Macharia, "Global Media Monitoring Project 2015," 31-40.

with others, particularly husbands and children. In *BH*, leader page writers consistently portrayed women as dependent. In contrast, the women's pages of both *BH* and *Utusan* portrayed more complex pictures of diverse "Malay-Muslim" women. They were expected to play a public role rather than being confined to the home. Some common features emerged across women's pages in both papers. The women's pages of both papers expressed consistent concern for the position of women, whether in terms of their rights within marriage (*Utusan*) or their physical safety and security (*BH*). For the most part, the papers avoided feminist discourse, and framed these concerns in ways consistent with assigned gender roles. Similar trends have been analysed in the discourse of Islamist women in Morocco ("family-centred approach") and the Mali Muslim women's movement explored in the Introduction.[12] According to my respondents, particularly *BH*'s Damia and Maimunah, the male editorial hierarchy resisted discussions of the ways women's lives were affected by policy and its implementation, while the journalists covering these issues perceived that they were advocating on behalf of Malay-Muslim women. This encounter with malestream resistance appears to mirror the experience of (some) women journalists in the West, but the parallels should not be over-emphasised: In particular, there is no Western parallel to the extent of party political dominance of the malestream newsroom. Parallels are more appropriate to the era of the partisan press, around the end of the 19th century, but even here editors put the needs of making a profit first, and devotion to the cause second.[13] Thus, there were common points of difference with the malestream pages: Despite the class differences examined in the previous chapters, women were expected to work, though not to the level of financial independence from their spouses. These portraits of entrepreneurs and career women provide an interesting contrast to the lived experiences of Malay-identifying middle-class entrepreneurs in Patricia Sloane's work, where women found their identity through work, and appeared to adopt a vividly contradictory persona inside the home.[14] The women portrayed in both *BH* and *Utusan*, however, found their identity primarily through their domestic lives, with work an important but largely secondary facet of their identity.

The need to negotiate with the malestream hierarchy meant that the women's page journalists drew upon a variety of resources to "bring forward" women including faith, professional identity, and the perception of the women's pages as a space outside party politics. The oral history of Zaharani Asran

[12] Salime, *Between Feminism and Islam*, 140-41; Dorothea E. Schulz, "Morality, Community, Publicness: Shifting Terms of Public Debate in Mali," in *Religion, Media, and the Public Sphere*, ed. Birgit Meyer and Annelies Moors (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 132-51. See also Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*.
[13] Thus, there is more consonance in outlook with the earlier Canadian women writers documented in Fiamengo, *The Woman's Page*, 39, 201-02.
[14] Sloane, *Entrepreneurship among the Malays*, 12.

and the *BH* campaign for the DVA enactment illustrate the first of these. Thus, Zaharani said, in relation to her outspokenness, "as long as you are a Muslim, you know your limits."[15] In her mind, her faith set the limits of her behaviour, rather than her editors, particularly in terms of defending the interests of women readers. Others also mentioned the importance of faith that being a "good Muslim" helped them frame what it meant to be a good journalist. Likewise, in the content, as explored in Chapter Five, when arguing for the DVA, Maizura Mohd Ederis was careful to defuse the religious objections to the DVA raised by a minister: Religious authority, in the form of the government's religious think-tank, was able to neutralise a minister's statement against the DVA.[16] Thus, faith was a personal resource, a professional resource and a strategic resource that, while it could work against women, was also deployed by those on the women's pages to bolster their credentials. This finding extends Janet Steele's work on the role of Islam in Malaysian and Indonesian newsrooms.[17] Steele argues that Islam was the lens through which professional norms were interpreted, but my findings show it had further multiple roles within the newsroom. The second resource women used to advocate with the malestream editorial hierarchy was professional identity. While the use of the codes of ethics was rarely evident, reiterating the findings of Nafise Motlagh, journalists often appealed to a norm of professionalism if challenged by the malestream hierarchy.[18] Thus, Salbiah Ani from *BH* argued that she could discuss issues touching on religion because "I do use my sense as a reporter, as an editor, on that kind of things."[19] Here, the sacred nature (as espoused by Berkowitz) of professional norms was used by women journalists to defend their stories. By appealing to their role as journalists, they were able to transgress unwritten bounds set by the malestream hierarchy, for instance in discussions on polygyny, domestic violence and women in the workplace. The latter two resources were drawn upon by respondents regardless of where they worked in the papers.

The women's page journalists, however, also drew upon the perception of their work as being outside politics to write on controversial issues. This finding is not new, Kay Mills mentions it in her classic work on women in the newsrooms.[20] Yet, Mills does not investigate this aspect of the women's pages beyond a brief mention of how the editors could write about otherwise taboo topics such as abortion. My findings show that even in an authoritarian media system, the perception of the women's pages

[15] Zaharani Asran interviewed 27 February 2014, Kuala Lumpur.
[16] Ederis, "*Jag Berpiket Desak Zaleha* (Jag Pickets Zaleha)."
[17] Steele, "Justice and Journalism."
[18] Motlagh, "Relationship between Malaysian Newspapers Journalists' Knowledge, Attitude and Law-Ethics Priority and Possible Ethical Behavior."
[19] Salbiah Ani interviewed 6 February 2014, *BH* office.
[20] Mills, *A Place in the News*.

as apolitical allowed both editors and reporters more freedom for investigative journalism, and to discuss political issues. Thus, in *Utusan*, Maimunah's column discussed polygyny and the ways in which the system discriminated against women, despite resistance from her male editors, as well as hostility, including death threats, from men affected by her writing.[21] In her column (see Chapter Four), she consistently insisted on women's role outside the home, at a time when all portrayals of women on the malestream pages focused on the need for women to remain in the private sphere. The contrast between the political work being done in these pages and *Wanita* Umno's portrayal as primarily a welfare organisation bolsters this argument: When actively touching on party politics, the stories in the womens' pages depicted women's activities as apolitical.[22] An interesting dynamic is that Maimunah explicitly linked women's paid work to their ability to perform their domestic role, in terms of protecting their children adequately through improved financial security, a reversal of the arguments underpinning the malestream pages.

My findings further indicate how women on the women's pages actively cultivated the pages as a separate, if not-quite-equal, sphere to the malestream pages. The perception of the women's sphere as fundamentally different from the malestream sphere, outside politics, helped enable women journalists conceptualise "women" as their special sphere of expertise. While this demarcation was evident to some extent in both papers, it was most obvious in *BH*, under the editorial leadership of Delaila Hussain. Delaila worked on various sections of the paper during her career. Her first bylines appeared in the main section of the newspaper. In 1989, she featured on the leader page interviewing Cabinet minister Rafidah Aziz, but by 1991, she was working on the women's pages.[23] From 1993 to 1996, she assumed greater control and independence for the women's pages. Two journalists working on the pages at that time, Maizura Mohd Ederis and Damia spoke in detail of how the women's pages operated.[24] As Maizura makes clear, Delaila actively recruited resources for the women's desk, from external columns such as that of much-loved veteran journalist Adibah Amin, to increasing the number of inhouse journalists. Thus, right from the start of her time on the women's desk in 1991, Delaila acted as an advocate for the women's pages, attempting to divert resources into these pages and to expand the ability of her staff to exercise control over content, rather than relying on outsourced wire content. While there was reliance on press release content, the amount of original by-lined material

[21] Maimunah, interview.
[22] See Chapters Four and Five, and, e.g., Osman, "*PWPK Bantu Wanita Pekebun Kecil Tambah Pendapatan*."
[23] Delaila Hussain, "*Pelabur Tempatan Dan Asing Sama Penting* (Local and Foreign Investors Are Equally Important)," *Berita Harian*, 15 March 1989, 10.
[24] The latter is a pseudonym.

steadily increases over this period, evidence of more resources at the hands of the women's desk editor.

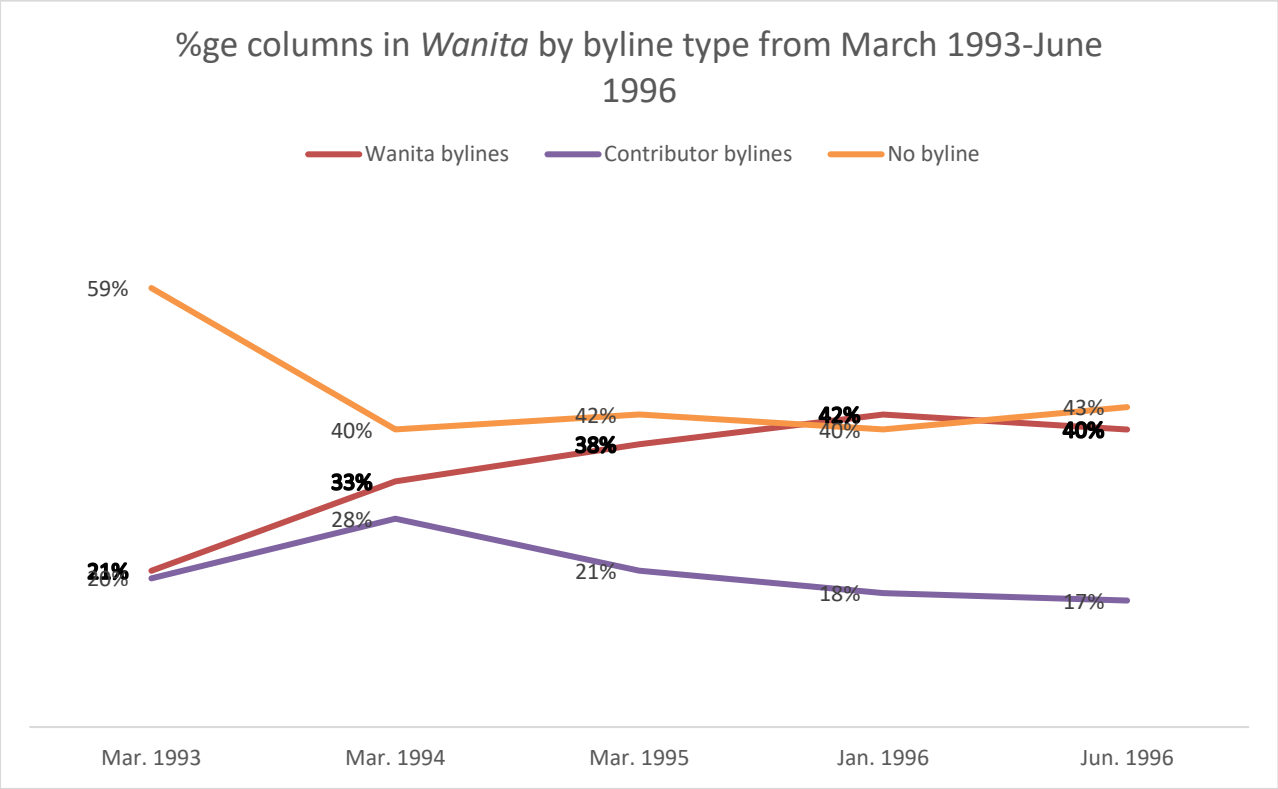

Table 6-1: The table shows the stark increase in the number of articles written by women's page journalists once Delaila Hussain became editor.

The big shift, however, came in 1993, with the *Berita Wanita* supplement section. The section shared characteristics with both the main paper and with a pull-out section: It was broadsheet in format, and could not be "pulled out", but the section had a title page, with its own masthead, and numbering started from that title page, rather than from the front page of the newspaper. A major innovation was the introduction of a "lead" column, *Pandangan Delaila* (Delaila's views, 1995-1996); and a table showing the women's desk as a separate editorial team, as discussed in Chapter Five. These gave the impression that the *Berita Wanita* was almost as a separate publication, printed by (*diterbitkan oleh*) "Berita Harian Sdn Bhd". Both innovations sought to portray the women's desk as having an identity that was separate to, with the implication of being independent from, the malestream newspaper. The status of the women working at the desk increased as a result. These were not merely cosmetic changes, although they obviously belie the degree of dependence upon the parent newspaper. While both Maizura and Damia talked about direction from above on issues such as the demonisation of al-Arqam (see Chapter Three), they also discussed the space they had to engage in investigative

journalism that would not have been possible on the main desk, as illustrated by the quote at the start of the chapter. Further, Damia discussed Delaila's struggle to maintain editorial independence. Importantly, this interference was primarily from the male editorial hierarchy. The male editors would defend male prerogatives on issues such as polygyny and domestic violence, while occasional political interference occurred on specific matters, such as the divorce of a senior Umno politician. During editorial meetings, for example, Damia said, "if we talk too much about polygamy, they [male editors] don't like it. They make fun, they ridicule in meetings."[25] Maizura noted that the women's pages remained marked by low status: "I don't know why top management look down, like our section is not good… We were successful… they give us a lot of work, but the appreciation was very low."[26] Here, Maizura measured success by the criteria of output of stories, increasing readership and high advertising revenue, as opposed to awards or industry recognition, neither of which were forthcoming.

The power of women's page journalists was still curtailed by the Umno, as noted above. Yet, the journalists were able to occupy the vacuum left on issues where the party had not articulated a stance, which occurred occasionally on matters of importance to women, but not on the structural constraints under which women operated. The Malay-Muslim women within Umno, for example, supported the political elite. This secondary position of women was never challenged, even at the height of the campaign for more women in leadership positions - rather, articles presented women as needing to build skills and improve competence to prove that they were worthy of positions of responsibility in line with the female *Melayu Baru*. Likewise, women's auxiliary position in the family was not challenged. Writers assumed both a benign state and the benign family/ marriage. These assumptions underpin the media elsewhere, for instance, as explored by Maggie Wykes in relation to how coverage of the mass killings by Fred and Rosemary West in the UK in the 1990s remained constrained by the ideal of the home as a safe space, rather than as a site of violence.[27] Likewise, though perhaps more explicitly, rather than confronting institutions, there were attempts to reform them, to bring them in line with an imagined ideal or norm. This attempt at reform was most clearly apparent in the *DCCK* column, which advocated proper implementation of laws rather than a need for law reform.

[25] Interviewed 26 January 2014, Bangsar.
[26] Maizura, interview.
[27] Wykes, "A Family Affair," 235. See also Lane Kirkland Gillespie et al., "Framing Deadly Domestic Violence: Why the Media's Spin Matters in Newspaper Coverage of Femicide," *Violence against women* 19, no. 2 (2013), 230-7; Rachel Pain, "Everyday Terrorism: Connecting Domestic Violence and Global Terrorism," *Progress in Human Geography* 38, no. 4 (2014), 534-5; Michael Wyness, "Children, Family and the State: Revisiting Public and Private Realms," *Sociology* 48, no. 1 (2014), 64-5.

Thus, the women's page journalists actively drew upon the perception of women's issues as being outside the party political sphere; on resources of faith and professionalism; and on their own expertise as women's page journalists to advocate for the various needs of women as political and public citizens. Nonetheless, as Damia noted, "I know I'm working for a pro-government newspaper."[28] The next section examines how the dynamic of media ownership and malestream values constrained the women's page journalists.

Constraints on women's page journalists in *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia*

The ambivalent relationship between the male editorial hierarchy and women journalists working on the women's pages between 1987 and 1998 in *BH* and *Utusan* has been traced in the last three chapters. Here, I further analyse the constraints under which women operated in these pages. One of the findings that was unanticipated was the degree of difference in the ways in which the women of the two papers resisted the male hierarchy. In each paper, they employed different strategies which impacted the portrayal of the "Malay woman" on the pages of the newspapers. Given, as explored in the Introduction and Chapter One, that the Umno owned both newspapers, I had expected that the similarities, in both strategy and effect, would dominate the differences. These constraints come into relief by comparing the editorial leadership of Delaila Hussain in *BH* and changes that came following the Asian financial crisis; and making comparisons with the same period in *Utusan*: Delaila exercised greater freedom than her peers in *BH* or *Utusan*, so here I examine why this was the case. Delaila had left the section by 1997, as had members of her team including Maizura and Damia. During March 1997, the women's desk lacked editorial leadership. In 1998, however, a new editorial team took over, with two of the same writers, Rosmin Darus and Wan Nurmawati Rani, but also new bylines, such as the editor Norhayati Md Said and reporter Khairana Sabtu. The *Pandangan Delaila* column was not replaced, so this space for an authoritative female voice closed down, but Norhayati retained other features, including most of the columns that had been present in 1996, and the separate editorial identity for the women's desk.

As noted in the Introduction, the 1990s, particularly the time when Delaila headed the women's desk, were politically stable, bookended by periods of instability first in 1987 and then as the Asian financial

[28] Damia, interview.

crisis hit from 1997 onwards. During these times of instability and crisis, there were fewer stories that challenged the male political or editorial elite, such as the coverage of polygyny and domestic violence from 1993-1996. Generational change increased the authority of women in *BH*, and made them increasingly aware of and resistant to the malestream hierarchy. More women entered the newsroom, with female graduates from the "third generation" having a largely female cohort both at university and as fresh entrants into the newsroom.[29] These women needed a tertiary degree as a prerequisite to entering the newsroom. I discussed the impact on the working culture in the newsroom in greater detail in Chapter Three, but, in summary, it affected the masculine culture which had previously dominated the editorial floor. Thus, internally, there were contradictory forces at play, in terms of whether the newsroom was amenable to women exercising greater agency and having the space to represent women in a manner different from that of the leader and/ or religion pages. The last factor here is the growing influence of Islamisation. As noted above, Islamisation was both an internal and external factor. It was internal in as far as all the respondents interviewed spoke of personal journeys of faith, as discussed in Chapter Three. Nonetheless, these journeys took place amid a growing Islamic bureaucracy, increasing student activism and strengthened *dakwah* movements, as discussed in the Introduction.[30] In terms of their impact on the newsroom, Damia notes, "I think now society has changed, awareness of Islamic values has increased, even the non-Malay papers are careful when they report on this."[31] Thus, external constraints in terms of "society's awareness" constricted discussion on matters such as polygyny, raised by Damia prior to the quote above. *Utusan* also reflected the process of Islamisation, which saw a shift away from the developmental discourse of Umno, as seen in Chapter Four, but rather than moving to a rights-based ideal, discourse moved to a more Islamist construction.

Above I suggest three key constraints on women's action: the external political environment, position of the women's pages in the newsroom hierarchy and increasing Islamisation. What is interesting here is that although two of the three constraints presented above (that is the external situation and increasing Islamisation) would lead us to expect the women's desk autonomy to be increasingly constrained by the late 1990s, what we observe is the opposite. I base this conclusion on several observations.

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[29] This reflected international trends, see Ball, "The 'Feminization' of British Television."
[30] See Anwar, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia*; Judith Nagata, "The Impact of the Islamic Revival (*Dakwah*) on the Religious Culture of Malaysia," in *Religion, Values and Development in Southeast Asia*, ed. Bruce Matthews and Judith Nagata (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), 37-50; Tahir, "The Notion of *'Dakwah'*."
[31] 'Damia', interview.

First, autonomy of the women's desks increased as the number of pages under their control increased. The women's pages in 1998 dwarfed those of any earlier year examined, particularly in *Berita Harian*. Thus, in 1989, the *BH* women's desk was responsible for two broadsheet pages each week (on different days) and two tabloid pull-out pages. In 1998, in contrast, the women's desk produced five broadsheet pages weekly, plus a 12-page tabloid pull-out. There were also two further broadsheet pages on a Sunday that had been part of the women's desk in previous years. This change indicates a huge increase in the number of pages and stories across the 1990s. Likewise, in *Utusan*, in 1989, in one week, the women's desk was responsible for six broadsheet pages and four pages in two weekly pull-out sections (tabloid size). In contrast, in 1998, they were responsible for 13 broadsheet pages, and five pages in one weekly pull-out section (tabloid). Various reasons could explain this, but it is in keeping with international trends across media to increase the content aimed at a female audience. As argued by Julie Golia, the women's pages of the newspapers have consistently been driven by the needs of advertisers and generating revenue, illustrated in Chapter Five by the increase in the proportion of the *Berita Wanita* team working in advertising sales, rather than reporting.[32] Further, a number of the respondents spoke about the commercial aspect of running a newspaper and the contribution of the women's pages and a high proportion of these pages were given over to advertisements, around half in both 1989 and 1998.

In *BH*, possibly driven by this additional space, the women's desk of 1998 engaged in campaigns on issues of importance to women. Campaigns are important because, as noted by social scientist John Richardson, they are "particularly instructive of the political position of newspapers in a social formation."[33] Thus, they shed light on how newspapers construct and maintain the attention of their audiences. While the major 1998 campaign examined in Chapter Five was on breastfeeding, there were other campaigns, also initiated by politicians. Nonetheless they were important both in terms of resources used (they consistently used original material, not wire stories or press releases) and space allocated. *Berita Wanita* retained some of the other features introduced under Delaila, such as the publication of the details of the women's desk as a distinct editorial team, which helped forge an independent identity for the women's pages. Again, this independent identity was less pronounced in the content of *Utusan* than it was in *BH*, but the journalists of the women's pages in their oral histories were as assertive of their campaigning role as the journalists who worked with Delaila, recalling in

[32] Golia, "Courting Women, Courting Advertisers." See also Harp, *Desperately Seeking Women Readers*.
[33] Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers*, 116.

particular Zaharani Asran's campaign for a dedicated Minister for Women, which ran after the period examined. The latter was initiated by *Wanita* Umno, but was a campaign within the party, and sparked opposition from the male editorial hierarchy.

The external constraints in 1988 operated in a different manner from those in 1998, to the benefit of the women's pages. At the level of Parliamentary politics, there had been shifts in the perceived threats to *BN*'s continued dominance. From the leader page, we can see, from 1995 onwards, that the government saw the main external threat to the power of *BN*, and its hegemony, as the Islamic opposition party, Pas, rather than either *Semangat 46* or the DAP. In this terrain, Umno portrayed itself as a defender of women's rights at least in comparison with Pas, as discussed in the Introduction.[34] Thus, the campaign for a third of leadership positions within government to be filled by women by the year 2005 can be seen in the light of this struggle between the two parties, a struggle between two visions of "the Malay Muslim woman." By this observation, I do not wish to suggest that the women's desk reporters were operating as mere pawns, but that this struggle allowed the women's desk to exercise greater agency within these constraints than was the case in 1988. As the national political situation in 1997-1998 (conflict within Umno, environmental threats), became less predictable, the women's desk took fewer campaigns or storylines that were independent of Umno, but chose within those constraints issues that would further the position of women.

Yet, as noted, *BH* reporters could take advantage of these changes better than the women's desk journalists at *Utusan.* Leadership of the desk was an important factor. Delaila Hussain's career path indicates that she was a fairly high-flying journalist, cold-storaged to the women's pages, as both Maizura and Damia noted. She entered the women's pages as they expanded, and had been, on this basis, able to negotiate for a larger team. Thus, she exerted an influence on how the pages developed because of the timing of her entrance into the women's desk. As mentioned, she also worked on these pages during a time of remarkable political stability.[35] The *BN*'s grasp over the country, in terms of its control of Parliament and the acceptance of its right to govern by most Malaysians, was secure. This period of political confidence coincided with an increase of women in the newsroom and the decreasing "masculinity" of the newsroom, as explored in Chapter Three. I have suggested three factors impacted upon the agency of the women's desk in *BH*: First, the individual initiative shown by

[34] Ting, "Gender Discourse in Malay Politics," 86-90.
[35] Akira Ishida, "The Malaysian General Elections of 1995," *Electoral Studies* 15, no. 1 (1995), 95-6.

women in positions of leadership within the desk.[36] Second, generational change in the leadership of the women's desk; and third, the middle-class audience presumed by the paper. Below I examine how the absence of these factors affected the authority of the women's page journalists in *Utusan.*

As noted in Chapter Three, the women of both women's desks saw their role as "mov(ing) women forward" and helping women achieve greater self-sufficiency, even equality. In *Utusan,* especially through the *DCCK* column, they confronted inequalities facing particularly lower-income (Malay-Muslim) women in a way that did not have a parallel in *BH*. Their ability to balance these insights with activism on the editorial floor, however, was constrained. I suggest one reason was the remarkable continuity in the make-up of the women's desk at *Utusan*. The first editor of the women's pages, Maimunah, remained active throughout and beyond the period studied here, and the pages were dominated by first and second generation reporters. Maimunah was the first editor of the women's pages, and worked from a position that was weaker than Delaila's: It is significant that she did not initiate these pages.[37] Rather, it was on the directive of a male editor, who made the marginal significance of the women's pages clear in the allocation of resources. Maimunah had to find "extra" time out of her normal reporting workload to work on the weekly women's page. Further, despite her years of experience and the obvious regard she was held in by her female colleagues, Maimunah consistently downplayed her own capacity and abilities. She portrayed herself as uneducated and merely lucky, rather than as the talented and hardworking journalist that was seen through her work and the eyes of others. Negotiating with the male editorial hierarchy for greater independence or autonomy for the women's pages was weakened by this self-perception. In contrast, under Delaila's leadership, the women's pages of *BH* could withstand - to some extent - male editorial pressures, and carve out a more distinct identity for the women's pages themselves. Delaila was on the border between the second and third generations of journalists, those better educated and more assured of their position as women journalists in the newsroom.[38] This generational shift did not take place in *Utusan*, leaving the women's desk in a weaker position.

[36] As seen in different contexts, such as Yang, "Women's Pages or People's Pages."; Méndez, "'Só Para Mulheres' (Just for Women)"; Lloyd, "Women's Pages in Australian Print Media from the 1850s."
[37] This is not unique to *Utusan*. See e.g. Kerry Wallach, "Front-Page Jews Doris Wittner's (1880-1937) Berlin Feuilletons," ed. Christa Spreizer, *Discovering women's histories: German-speaking journalists (1900-1950)* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014), 128.
[38] Delaila Hussain completed a Masters thesis in 1982, so she was borderline second and third generation.

A second factor that distinguished the experience of *Utusan* was the different relationship of the newspaper to the Umno. As argued in Chapter Four, the paper posited an identity between *Utusan*, the Malays and Umno which was not evident in *BH*. This relationship was felt throughout the paper. As also explored in Chapter Four, the marginalisation of *Wanita* Umno within Umno had repercussions for the career prospects of women working within the paper, particularly those assigned to the women's desk. Neither paper framed *Wanita* Umno activities, except during its assembly, as being political and both relegated them to the women's pages. *Wanita* Umno leaders were disadvantaged in building an independent following among male party members who controlled votes to the Supreme Council.[39] Women's page journalists cultivated links with politicians, most evident in the relationship between Zaharani and Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, who became the first Minister for Women (see Chapter Three), but this relationship also illustrates the limits: Shahrizat remained beholden to the male political hierarchy for her position, likewise Zaharani Asran did not rise to a position of power within the paper. Thus, women assigned to the women's desk lacked the political resources to successfully negotiate with the male hierarchy. The limited political capital available to a politician such as Shahrizat was unlikely to be expended in helping women's desk journalists expand their influence or standing within *Utusan*, yet that dynamic was important in all the malestream sections of the newspaper. Rosnah Majid and Jamhariah Jaafar, who covered economics and politics, for instance, entered politics and the senior civil service respectively after leaving the newspaper, the former at the behest of Mahathir.[40] None of the women working on the women's pages had a similar post-journalism career trajectory.

A third impact was that lower-class women were more vulnerable to the changing political climate than their middle-class counterparts who were assumed to read *BH*, particularly in the face of increasing Islamisation. In Patricia Sloane's portrayal of Malay female entrepreneurs, Islam and entrepreneurship are complementary: The female entrepreneurs find justification for their entrepreneurial activity in both discourses of nationalism and in discourses of Islamisation, similar to the point of view expressed by Mahathir in *The Challenge*, though this connection is not explicitly discussed.[41] In contrast, as explored below, the way in which Islam was implemented, particularly

[39] A key exception is Rafidah Aziz, who as Minister for International Trade and Industry often featured elsewhere. However, as clear from her biography, this position was largely dependent on male largesse and her own formidable skills, rather than support from within Wanita Umno Zhou, *Rafidah Aziz Sans Malice*, 72-122. In turn, she rarely appeared on the women's pages.
[40] Rosnah, interview; Jamhariah, interview.
[41] Sloane, *Entrepreneurship among the Malays*, 60-1; Sloane-White, "Working in the Islamic Economy," 309-11.

through the regulation of marriage, divorce and polygyny, heightened the insecurity faced by *Utusan*'s readers, which was further increased by the increasing self-reliance required by the neoliberal entrepreneurial self in these pages, discussed further below.

These developments dovetailed with the increasing Islamisation of society as a fourth factor that had a particular impact on *Utusan*. Recalling Noraini Othman's definition of Islamisation:

> Islamisation is that process by which what are perceived as Islamic laws, values and practices are accorded greater significance in state, society and culture. It is a contemporary phenomenon partly associated with the postcolonial era and partly seen as an assertion or re-assertion of identity in response to modernization.[42]

Islamisation affected the newsroom through changes in individual behaviour and through changes in content, explored in Chapter Four.[43] This process was not necessarily detrimental to the position of women in the newsroom or in wider society, but it added a new factor to the dynamics of power and made it harder for *Utusan*'s women's pages to contest changes to power structures as these were framed as moves from the secular to the religious. As explored in Chapter Three, there were individual journeys of faith made by the journalists, and documented by almost every first- and second-generation respondent, in both papers. These journeys were far from uniform, although they shared common elements, in particular a move to wearing a headscarf or similar covering.[44] The journeys of faith were also relevant to the relinquishing of spaces to a male religious elite. Thus, when a secular but female-controlled space was taken over by the male Muslim elites, such as the Islamic Medical Council, the women's page journalists did not contest the loss. Given how tentative women journalists were to discuss Islam and the continuing influence of older journalists who were less confident of their qualifications, the imposition of religious experts was more evident in *Utusan* than in *BH*. The religious framing helped these changes to take place with minimal resistance.

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[42] Othman, "Islamization and Democratization in Malaysia in Regional and Global Contexts," 124.
[43] The impact of Islamic values on news values is explored in Steele, "Justice and Journalism," 537-45; Lawrence Pintak, "Islam, Identity and Professional Values: A Study of Journalists in Three Muslim-Majority Regions," *Journalism*, 15, no. 4 (2014), 490-8.
[44] This resonates with the literature such as Anwar, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia*, 72-73; Hoffstaedter, *Modern Muslim Identities*, 161.

Agency, paradox and Islam

I have established that the women's desk in both papers portrayed a "Malay-Muslim woman" that was to some extent independent of the "woman" on the leader page. I now examine the tensions that existed within these various constructions. The major tension I wish to examine, although it has various threads, is the tension between the responsibilities that women bore and the power, or lack of power that they held. The contradictions between the independent neoliberal *Melayu Baru* and the Muslim woman as the holder of continuity, community and family made these tensions manifest through the career and/ or working woman versus the mother, wife and holder of culture; and the gap between the often two-dimensional women as perceived by men and the lived complexity of being female. "Woman" as a site of contradiction has resulted in a wide range of productive research, such as psychologist Christine Griffin et al's exploration of contradictions in the UK in the relationship between young women and alcohol: The media simultaneously constructs alcohol consumption as a sign of women's independence, while inhabiting it as a place of moral danger.[45] Yet, the only place where these contradictions were to any extent acknowledged was on the women's pages, though in very different ways in each paper. The limited power of the women's desk within the paper was reflected in the inability of the women's desk(s) to offer solutions that would involve challenging both the political and editorial hierarchy. Rather, as explored below, the journalists posited a solution that reinforced men's authority over women.

Next, I analyse the responsibilities that women were supposed to bear; the ways their ability to carry out these responsibilities was limited through women's construction in the leader and/ or religion pages; and the limited resolutions offered by the women's pages. The first responsibility, as unmarried women, was as dutiful daughters responsible for managing (repudiating) male lust. Secondly, women as wives, and the responsibilities that this entailed; and lastly, women as working mothers. These were not the only responsibilities borne by women, but they were those most prominent in the material examined, and forcefully make the case for the gap between responsibilities and power.

[45] Christine Griffin et al., "Inhabiting the Contradictions: Hypersexual Femininity and the Culture of Intoxication among Young Women in the UK," *Feminism & Psychology* 23, no. 2 (2013), 187-88. See also Akass, "Motherhood and Myth-Making"; Josefin Bernhardsson and Alexandra Bogren, "Drink Sluts, Brats and Immigrants as Others," *Feminist Media Studies* 12, no. 1 (2011), 9; Lumsden, "'You're a Tough Guy, Mary'," 913.

Dutiful daughters, enforcers of morality

BH and *Utusan* both portrayed unmarried women as potentially dangerous, to themselves and to male chastity. This danger inherent in the unmarried woman has been a longstanding theme in Malay writing: It is for example portrayed in nationalist Malay literature and has been analysed by scholars such as Virginia Hooker and Henk Maier in this context.[46] Modernity and concern with the influence of the allegedly decadent West heightened these anxieties in Malaysia as elsewhere.[47] This trend was particularly marked in the religious advice columns of *Utusan* and *BH* where young women were guardians of both their own and male lust. Yet, they were also repeatedly shown to be powerless in the face of male authority. The stories of under-aged girls who were raped in *Utusan* and the extensive coverage of the so-called "*pesta seks*" in *BH* illustrate this paradox.[48] In both instances, girls, acknowledged in law to be unable to consent to having sex, were raped, and yet still held to be accountable for their actions.[49] *BH* columnists were less likely to condemn victims of sexual assault and rape when the question was directly framed in those terms. The assault, and with it male power, however, was often rendered invisible. The "*pesta seks*", for example, was framed as consensual sex, so there was no assault. In this framing, female morality and the threats to female morality being posed by modernity became central, rather than male violence. In specific cases, context was elided and the girls held responsible. They had sex because they lacked faith and their parents neglected them. Yet, these incidents were also seen as part of a general trend, categorised as social ills (*gejala sosial*) brought about by modernity and a turn away from religion.[50] Thus, the over-arching problem was modernity and religious dissolution, and the resolution had to be found outside the discourse of development. The solution suggested was that families should inculcate religious values among their children, emphasising the turn to religion.[51] The assumption seems to be that religiosity would stop male attacks on the young girls - making the victims responsible for the actions of the aggressors. Women were not offered personal or political solutions to the paradox of being in a position of powerlessness yet responsible for the management of sexual aggression by men.

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[46] Hooker, *Writing a New Society*, 23-27; Hendrik M. J. Maier, "A Chew of Sugarcane: Ahmad Kotot's *Hikayat Percintaan Kasih Kemudaan*," *Southeast Asian Studies* 34, no. 3 (1996), 559.
[47] E.g. Valentine Moghadam, M., *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies* (Helsinki; London; New Jersey; Karachi: Zed Books, 1994).
[48] A detailed and disturbing assessment of rape in Malaysia has been done by a women's NGO, AWAM: Alina Rastam et al., *The Rape Report: An Overview of Rape in Malaysia* (Petaling Jaya: All Women's Action Society (AWAM)/ Strategic Information Research Development (SIRD), 2002), 37-46.
[49] The age of consent in Malaysia is 16, unless the child is married.
[50] See also Noor Azlan Mohd Noor and Bazlin Darina Ahmad Tajudin, "Sustainable Development and Crime: Non-Statutory Rape Cases in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia," *Selangor Humaniora Review (SHARE)* 1, no. 1 (2014), 79.
[51] See e.g. "*Perluas Konsep Pembimbing Rakan Sebaya* (Broaden Peer Carer Concept)," *Berita Harian*, 9 May 1998, 24.

Women as wives: Insecurity, dependence and institutional inadequacy

The problem of financial dependence was at the heart of the tensions faced by the "Malay-Muslim wife", explored most fully in the *DCCK* column in *Utusan*. As noted in Chapter Four, financial dependence was a problem due to the power imbalance created by the ways in which polygyny was legitimised. Yet, there was a deeper problem in regard to marital relations and what happened when marriages failed. These issues were heightened during this period by reforms to the Islamic Family Law.[52]

The advice columns and the religion pages portrayed women as primarily passive in relations.[53] In *BH*'s *Sri Siantan* column, for example, the agony aunt advised women was to forgive male wrongdoing, to wait for male declarations of affection.[54] It was less evident in *Kak Nor* for unmarried women, but married women were depicted in a similar way - their primary role was to meet the needs of their spouse and children, and to forgive them for wrongdoing. Further, as the *DCCK* column illustrated, there were serious imbalances within the law, in terms of the power of husbands over their wives particularly in matters such as divorce, polygyny and maintenance. The courts' interpretation of the laws often ignored powers granted to wives, the usual focus of the *DCCK* column. Thus, as noted in Chapter Four, women were in a precarious position. They were expected to be financially dependent on their husbands, which was seen in the marginalisation of their careers as providing meaning and worth to their lives. Thus, again, women were faced with an imbalance between their responsibilities and their power.

Yet, in both papers, the women's pages had consistent coverage of women in work, these forming the majority of the articles in these pages. In *BH*, work was portrayed as fulfilling and an important part of a woman's identity, while in *Utusan* it was depicted as being necessary for a woman's financial security and to fulfil her role as a responsible mother. In both papers, men's inability or unwillingness to

[52] Abdullah, Abdullah, and Ferdousi, "The Fragile Status of a Muslim Wife," 142-46; Maznah Mohamad, "Feminism and Islamic Family Law Reforms in Malaysia: How Much and to What Extent?," *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 4, no. 1 (1998), 23-26; Siraj, "Women and the Law," 564-69.

[53] The role of advice columns in gender construction has been explored in other contexts, e.g. McRobbie, "Just Like a *Jackie* Story"; Currie, "Dear Abby"; Gudelunas, "Talking Taboo"; Shissler, "'If You Ask Me'." In a Malaysian context, see Ismail, "In Pursuit of Mr. Right."

[54] These stereotypes are enduring over time, see Hooker, "Transmission through Practical Example," 99-101.

provide for women were implied and solutions, however inadequate, proffered. These tensions are an iteration of the femininities explored by Maila Stivens, who studies how the impact of rapid modernisation caused unease among those identifying as Malay, exposed in an outburst into the alleged practices of sexual slavery in the *dakwah* group Al-Arqam.[55] Here, there was deviation from both the script of the malestream editorial hierarchy and the Umno, neither of which acknowledged that inequality within marriage was the source of many of women's problems. The resources drawn upon by women page writers in writing this story of women were two-fold. First, the stories of the readers themselves, key to the *DCCK* and advice columns. Second, again, the Umno rhetoric of development: Women in the workforce was seen as a key part of modernity, and thus part of the Umno vision, especially as a point of comparison with Pas, explored further in the next section.

Gejala sosial and the bad mother

In this section I examine how the parent/ mother was distinguished as the root of social ills. The shift to having both parents working and the pressures of modernity were cited as the root causes of social ills, but in context, the mother can be read as responsible for "social ills", rather than both parents simultaneously. Thus, the apparently gender-neutral construction of the "problem" of two working parents has to be read with the concurrent perception that women had only recently entered the workforce.[56] Thus, the problem was that the mother was working, in contrast to an imagined golden past where mothers stayed at home, echoing the favourable middle-class coverage of stay-at-home mothers during the 2008 financial crisis in the UK, analysed by Shani Orgad and Sara De Benedictus.[57] Both newspapers identified the impact of television and/ or the internet; the influence of the West and Western standards of (sexual) permissiveness; and the breakdown of traditional families among these ills. Underlying each of these was the issue of neglectful or bad parenting, particularly prominent in the discussion of the victims of the "*pesta seks*" coverage. Discussions on issues such time management in both papers corroborated this disparity in women's responsibility. Thus, while social ills were present in the youth and framed as a threat to the nation, it was the failure of mothering that was the root cause of this problem. This failure was framed both in terms of their (in)ability to act as a cultural custodian and because they were distracted by the worldly problems of balancing a career and family. On this issue, two solutions were posited. The first was time management, resolving the

[55] Stivens, "Sex, Gender and the Making of the New Malay Middle Class."
[56] E.g., Ismail Abdul Rahman, "*Membina Generasi Yang Berakhlak* (Build a Moral Generation)," *Berita Harian*, 11 March 1988, 8.
[57] Orgad and De Benedictis, "The 'Stay-at-Home' mother."

issue of the unavailable mother.[58] Yet, the problem of Western influences, whether at school, through the television or through unreliable acquaintances remained - so the second answer posited was that the available mothers should inculcate Islamic values in their children.

Working parents were not only a cause of "social ills", but were seen to be undermining the nation. The contrast between good parents, who are attentive to the needs of the nation, and bad parents who undermine development, has been drawn by Sara Niner et al, in relation to the English-language daily, *The Star*.[59] Similarly, in the Malay-lanugage papers, "social ills" undermined nation-building. Thus, solutions were not framed as applicable on a purely individual basis, but as solutions in need of political intervention, in particular in the education system, but also in terms of the censorship and control of the broadcast media. The dominant thread in the women's pages, however, was of working women, more akin to the discourse of empowerment, which remained central to Umno rhetoric (such as the policy for 30% of government decision-making positions to be filled by women). In turn, the discourse of dutiful daughters, wives and mothers was in line with the malestream editorial depictions of women by the end of the period, which focused on women in domestic roles, defined by their relationships. Thus, while the use of Umno rhetoric and the role of Umno were not discussed either by my respondents nor on the women's pages themselves, the women's pages were closer to the rhetoric used by Umno than the malestream pages, and used these ideas to "bring women forward", rather than confining them to the domestic realm. Importantly, however, the malestream editorial depictions were closer to the role of women in Umno, and closer to the Islamic family values that were concurrently espoused by the Umno.

The women's pages both contributed to and undermined this construction with their focus on the working woman and the discussion of women's responsibilities when men failed to provide for their families. The solutions offered, of ensuring financial independence and a reliance on personal piety were within the frame of neoliberalism, thus, the women writers of the women's pages were able to draw upon these tropes as resources. While there was little discussion in the women's pages or elsewhere of the importance of fathers, this attention to the multiple roles of women problematised the straightforward blaming of women present on the malestream pages.

[58] This relates to the idea of self as enterprise, see McNay, "Self as Enterprise," 61.
[59] Niner, Ahmad, and Cuthbert, "The 'Social Tsunami'," 444. See also Md Syed, "Malay Women as Discerning Viewers," 658.

Islam as the answer

In all the above tensions, religion figured prominently as a solution to the problems. Whether it was individual religious responses such as greater faith; or communal religious responses such as increasing religious instruction in schools, Islam was suggested as being the answer to these inter-related problems.

While not debating the worth of this as a potential resolution, I would like to draw attention to the party-political implications of this Islamisation of women's roles. From the analysis of *Utusan* in particular, in regard to "the" Malay-Muslim woman, increasing GDP had translated to increasing "social ills", increasing financial insecurity, and increased responsibility for women: Development, a prominent part of Umno's rhetoric, was not improving women's lives. In both the leader and religion pages, men could shift blame onto local or foreign others, their insecurities seen as a result of colonisation and ongoing discrimination, not lack of time management or hard work. Women, however, were responsible for failing to manage their time, failing to manage their homes and, in the context of the gendered layoffs during the Asian financial crisis, failing to maintain self-confidence. Women were expected to be dependent on their husbands, but this dependence carried insecurity, both because of the (allegedly) increasing insecurity of the marital relationship but also because the assumption of dependency meant that women were more likely to face job insecurity than their male counterparts. Thus, while the *BN* and Umno were shown to provide training and help to open up economic opportunities (particularly in *Utusan*), these opportunities did not guarantee economic security. In this context, the only answer posited to the problem of economic security was to become a faithful (to Allah) and loyal (to your husband) wife, who would not face the problems of either a second wife or divorce. Thus, Islam, not government-driven development, provided the answer to women's financial insecurity.

This answer was only possible on the women's pages because of the perception of these pages as outside the arena of party politics. While the role of women was highly politicised, the papers portrayed women themselves as neither citizens or having an interest in party political contests. This apolitical construction of women helped to resolve the conflict set up by Maznah Mohamad, looking at a slightly later period: That by inscribing patriarchal hierarchies into Syariah law, the legal and

executive branches of government were undoing the unity of "the" Malay-Muslim constituency.[60] Thus, despite the overt contest for Malay votes between Umno and the Islamist party Pas, the women's pages could offer a solution to some of the problems of development that seemed more in line with the vision of women proposed by Pas than Umno, because they were, first, outside the ideal constituency examined by Maznah above, and second, they were not construed as being part of the party political arena. I am not arguing here that the women's page journalists were supporters of Pas, nor that there was an overt agenda, but that the vacuum created by the exclusion of party politics led to the filling of the women's pages with depictions that did not conform to either Umno rhetoric or practice. It should be noted, however, that this construction of Islam as the answer to women's ills was increasingly prominent over time, particularly during the Asian financial crisis, a time when the contest between Umno and Pas was acute. Yet, the women writers themselves were not supporters of the opposition, broadly, nor Pas in particular: The turn to Islam in the women's pages reflected both the personal journeys of faith and the lack of alternative constructions available to women, for example, due to the exclusion of both feminist and left-wing politics.

Conclusion

Women's desk journalists drew upon resources of faith, professionalism and the perceived apolitical nature of women's issues. Due to the marginal nature of their audience, and the marginal nature of the work done by these journalists, the women's desk was able to depict women in ways that were at odds with the dominant malestream woman. These portrayals buttressed male privilege, but showed how the lived realities of women's lives were elided in public policy. During times of financial stress, such as the Asian financial crisis, the precariousness of women's lives came to the forefront, in times of affluence their failures at balancing careers and motherhood were more prominent. Thus, even in good times, with increasing pressures of modernity, women were seen as failing in their ability to maintain marriages, culture and religion, leading to a growth in "social ills" which threatened the nation. The newspapers both posited one answer - a turn to Islam. Alternative resolutions to the problems faced by women were, however, possible. The sharing of responsibilities within the home, greater legal control over the conditions of marriage and divorce, a focus on protecting women's rights - but each of these would substantially challenge the pre-eminence of men within the family, which the male editorial (and possibly political) hierarchy resisted.

[60] Mohamad, "Making Majority, Undoing Family."

Some of the contradictions presented here were universal for the Malay-Muslim, regardless of gender. Thus, the tension between dependency upon Umno and independence from the party was also keenly felt by "the" Malay-Muslim man. In turn, contradictions between consumerism, modernity and economic well-being on one hand; and motherhood, Islam and financial precariousness on the other were primarily felt by women. Women were depicted in the newspapers (including the women's pages) in ways that put these contradictions into the foreground. Unlike their male counterparts, whose tensions were resolved by economic growth and more likely to emerge during times of financial stress, the contradictions in women's lives, framed by the concepts of *gejala social* or social ills, were heightened by economic growth

Thus, while the women's pages were seen as a space outside party politics, the ways in which women were written had implications that could be translated into the party political arena. These depictions were only possible because the women's pages were seen as marginal. Faith as an answer was, furthermore, undermined from within the women's pages, through the concrete examples of men's failure to provide for their wives, and the attention paid to the working woman. Yet, no other solution was offered to the female reader.

Conclusion

> The government might be looking at political issues, whatnot, most likely the government's will is being adhered to. But when it comes to entertainment and women's page, you actually have better freedom of speech there. You can literally write about anything and everything.
>
> - Sa'adah Ismail (*Utusan*, 1979-1989)[1]

The women's pages of the Malay-language press, as the quote above shows, occupy a unique position in authoritarian Malaysia's media landscape. Despite being an integral part of the government-owned media, in terms of career path and prestige within the organisation, the journalists working on these pages were marginalised. Yet they had freedom to explore issues of political importance outside the frames of the Umno/ *BN* idealised subject. Using a combination of oral histories and analysis of articles, this thesis asked whether and how the women's pages framed the Malay-Muslim woman in ways different from the malestream pages of the newspapers, and in turn the relationship of these depictions to the Umno framing of the Malay-Muslim woman. One of the primary differences was the absence of women from the leader and religion pages, particularly the former, which contributed to a less complex and nuanced portrayal of and engagement with women, and a lack of recognition of the variety of roles that women play.[2] Instead women were primarily wives and mothers, although, as I show, these narratives varied over time. It is significant that the roles became more constrained, reflecting, in particular, the process of Islamisation.[3] In contrast, the women's pages showed the complexity of women's roles in society and the various social, legal and economic forces to which they were subjected.

Thus, the argument I have presented falls into three parts. I have argued, first, that the Umno-

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[1] Interviewed at Bangsar Shopping Centre, 14 March 2014.
[2] Similar results on the lack of women in hard news are seen elsewhere, e.g., Harp, Bachmann, and Loke, "Where Are the Women?"; Randal A. Beam and Damon T. Di Cicco, "When Women Run the Newsroom: Management Change, Gender, and the News," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 87, no.2 (2010), 393-411; WACC, "Who Makes the News?," 28-30; Macharia, "Global Media Monitoring Project 2015," 31-37.
[3] For different theorisations and examples of this process see Stivens, "'Family Values' and Islamic Revival."; Anwar, "Islamisation and Its Impact on Laws and the Law Making Process in Malaysia."; Susan E. Ackerman, "*Dakwah* and Minah Karan: Class Formation and Ideological Conflict in Malay Society," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-Land- en Volkenkunde* 147, no. 2/3 (1991), 193-215; Joy Kooi-Chin Tong and Bryan S Turner, "Women, Piety and Practice: A Study of Women and Religious Practice in Malaysia," *Contemporary Islam* 2, no. 1 (2008), 41-59.

controlled press was not monolithic. There was contest over resources, and in this contest the women's pages were secondary to the politics and malestream sections of the papers. In Chapter Three, I demonstrated that the women working on the women's pages saw themselves as being, and were seen by others as being, on the boundaries of that system, similar to the experiences of women's page journalists in areas as diverse as Korea, Britain and the Eastern Congo.[4] Second, I argued that women and women's issues were considered apolitical, outside the realm of party politics. Women writing for women had more freedom, as the respondents note, which was in part exercised because the least politically reliable journalists were likely to end up on these pages. These women still believed that Umno was the natural party of government, but their world-view was not identical with Umno's world-view, in contrast with the politics reporters who, as Jamhariah Jaafar said, "know how to write".[5] They also perceived that they were writing for a space outside party politics, and thus less susceptible to political control. This lack of orthodoxy allowed alternative perspectives to seep into these pages. Changes within the Umno did not dictate changes in the women's pages, as they did changes in the malestream pages. The women's pages instead reflected changes in women's lives, whether readers' or journalists'. This decoupling between the women's pages and party politics offered space for a more complex portrayal of women than other sections of the newspaper. Third, as the malestream depictions of women increasingly narrowed their lives to the private sphere, the hegemonic depiction of women in the malestream editorial page became increasingly two-dimensional, conforming to the Islamic family values identified by Maila Stivens, but differing from the role primarily assigned to men as drivers of the Umno developmental model.[6] This model was prominent on the women's pages. The woman in the women's pages did not conform to this persona: There was a gap between the hegemonic woman and the women's page women. This gap, in turn, reflected contradictions between women's lives and how laws and institutions narrated women. Thus, the "Malay-Muslim woman" was on ambiguous territory, caught between the development model of Umno rhetoric and the Islamic ideal of Umno and malestream editorial policy. Despite being overt supporters of the BN model, they created spaces where the hegemonic malestream woman was not absolute. The women's page journalists selectively drew on Umno policies, codes of ethics and personal faith to provide constructions of women that demanded that women play a public role in the workforce alongside their private, domestic role.

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[4] See, e.g. Sooyoung Cho and Lucinda D. Davenport, "Gender Discrimination in Korean Newsrooms," *Asian Journal of Communication* 17, no. 3 (2007), 286-300; Ross, "Women at Work."; Elisa García-Mingo, "Mamas in the Newsroom: Women's Journalism against Sexual Violence in Eastern Congo," *Journal of African Media Studies* 9, no. 1 (2017), 215-27.

[5] Jamhariah Jaafar interviewed Bangsar, 27 March 2014.

[6] Stivens, "'Family Values' and Islamic Revival."

Several tensions, however, that constrained the women's page journalists. First, they were subject to greater censorship, despite the avowedly apolitical nature of their work. My expectations had mirrored the expectations of my respondents who - unless they were political writers - assumed that politics would attract the most censorship. Andrew Neil, however, observed of working in the press owned by media baron Rupert Murdoch, that if you disagree with those who own the paper, you don't rise to positions of authority.[7] The journalists working in the political pages were trusted to "know how to write", which was not a technical but a political skill. This skill was not about audience expectations, but about the expectations of the political party that owned the paper, Umno. The journalists among the cohort who were politically unreliable were those found in the entertainment, literature and the women's pages. There was thus a tension between the freedom of the women's page journalists and the expectations of political conformity across the paper. Second, Malay-language journalists had a unique relationship to the male political hierarchy. Due to the political ownership of these papers, the patronage system played out within the editorial hierarchies in ways different from either Western or neighbouring countries. Thus, reporters needed political connections to reach the upper echelons of the editorial hierarchies of these papers which meant that the editorial hierarchy mirrored the political hierarchy. Women page journalists were outside this political hierarchy, which contributed to their struggle against the male editors: Women's page journalists felt that they were not supported by the malestream hierarchy who did not understand the needs of their readers or their pages. In both papers, women's page journalists believed they contributed more (in terms of number of pages, as well as advertising revenue) than they received.[8] Third, as typified by the responses of Zaharani Asran in Chapter Three, but evident among other respondents, the women's page journalists believed, particularly in *Utusan*, they played a pedagogical role, bringing women "forward".[9] They did not see their role in the same way as women working in the malestream, who instead spoke about the need to explain government policy and the government perspective, to ensure that readers saw things the right (i.e. the Umno) way. The pedagogical framing tapped into the Malaysian, nationalist discourse of development and modernity, but it also indicated that there was an unmet need for women's development needs to be addressed. While the journalists interviewed often worked closely with women from *Wanita* Umno, such as Zaharani with Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, who went on to become the first Minister for Women, this locus of stories also showed the limits of the political party structure, in that women were still under-represented and in need of being brought

[7] Stuart Allan, "Introduction: Hidden in Plain Sight - Journalism's Critical Issues," in *Journalism: Critical Issues*, ed. Stuart Allan (Maidenhead; New York: Open University Press, 2005), 11.
[8] This was mentioned by both Maizura Mohd Ederis, interviewed Taman Melawati, 13 January 2014; and Zaharani Mohd Asran, interviewed Kuala Lumpur, 27 February 2014.
[9] Zaharani, interview.

"forward" in comparison to men. Thus, while the women working on the women's pages were both defenders of Umno and the papers in which they worked, this was not a straightforward relationship. This complexity is reflected in the different constructions of women on the women's pages and on the leader and religion pages.

In Chapter Six, I examined the resources that women journalists writing for the women's pages drew upon to negotiate these tensions. These included their self-perception as professionals with an area of expertise, women, which allowed them to withstand the demands of the malestream hierarchy. Further, the processes of Islamisation provided a system of values above those espoused by the malestream editors. These processes were complex, but Islam was used as a personal, professional and strategic resource to bolster support for story arcs. Likewise, neoliberalism offered both an increased burden for women, but also a key support for advocacy for women's public role, as noted in Chapters Four and Five on the increasing dominance of a neoliberal self-sufficient Malay-Muslim woman. As has been noted in other contexts and in the Introduction, both neoliberal and Islamisation policies had a disproportionate impact on the welfare of women.[10] In Chapters Four and Five, I outlined how neoliberalism and Islamisation affected women in Malaysia in terms of financial security, the security of married life, and the ability to find redress through the courts, as represented in the pages of *BH* and *Utusan*. While the suggested answer of greater piety fits in with neoliberal policy strands - the responsibility lies with the individual, and an individualised response is the answer - we can also see how it fails to account for the material and human conflicts that man-made secular and religious institutions created. The blame for the resulting conditions is shifted to women and their lack of piety. Thus, while both strands of policy development could be and were used by women's page journalists as resources for their stories, their professional status and the pages themselves, they simultaneously increased burdens on both the journalists and their readers.

A theme running through this thesis is women's (and men's) relationship to "development" and

[10] These effects can be nuanced. In the case of Islamisation, see Anne Meneley, "Fashions and Fundamentalisms in Fin-De-Siecle Yemen: Chador Barbie and Islamic Socks," *Cultural Anthropology* 22, no. 2 (2007), 214-43; Riffat Hassan, "Challenging the Stereotypes of Fundamentalism: An Islamic Feminist Perspective," *The Muslim World* 91, no. 1-2 (2001), 55-69; Jeremy Menchik, "The Co-Evolution of Sacred and Secular: Islamic Law and Family Planning in Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 22, no. 3 (2014), 359-78. See also Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts: Ideologies of Domination, Common Interests, and the Politics of Solidarity ", ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminist genealogies, colonial legacies, democratic futures* (New York; London: Routledge, 1997), 3-29; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ""Can the Subaltern Speak?" Revised Edition, from the "History" Chapter of *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*," in *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 21-79; Acker, "Gender, Capitalism and Globalization."

"progress", as defined by the ruling coalition. The papers portrayed traditional community as belonging to an idyllic past, but this utopian representation covertly questioned the purpose and direction of development and "progress" that had been at the heart of the BN/ Umno agenda since Independence.[11] The solution posited to resolving these contradictions was "Islamic development", yet a close reading shows that this had not been delivered, begging the question of why a Malay-Muslim dominated government was unable to solve the problems caused by modernisation and development, often lumped together as social ills (*gejala sosial*).[12] Together, these themes illustrate how the Malay-Muslim woman constructed on the women's pages differed in substantive ways from the women in the malestream pages and how women journalists were less constrained by party politics on the women's pages.

Importance of the findings

My aim was to investigate the gendered operations of Malay-language newsrooms, particularly in response to economic, social and political pressures. I deconstructed the monolithic image of the newspapers, and illustrated how journalists on the margins of the papers were able to differ substantively from the hegemonic Umno representation of the Malay-Muslim women. Through a better understanding of the constraints and opportunities that journalists work under in the Malaysian newsroom, we gain a better understanding of how power circulated in an authoritarian newsroom, and how women worked under these conditions.

Unlike research that examines the women's pages in other contexts, this thesis has not focused on how the women's pages perpetuated female stereotypes in and of themselves, nor how they contributed to the feminist movement. Instead, it asks how they differ from the malestream pages. The journalists on these pages were neither completely passive, as in Nancy Gakahu and Lynette Mukhongo's analysis of the women's pages in Kenya, nor aligned to feminism or the feminist movement as in the work of Bernadette Barker-Plummer.[13] This thesis complements this earlier research by looking first at the way women wrote about women and their lives on these pages. This portrayal differed from the ways in which they were depicted by the male hierarchies, reflective of the political hierarchy, as argued in the Introduction. Second, in examining not only articles that look

[11] E.g. Tim Bunnell, "Multimedia Utopia? A Geographical Critique of High-Tech Development in Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor," *Antipode* 34, no. 2 (2002), 265-95.
[12] Explored in different ways in Fischer, *Proper Islamic Consumption*, 151-52; Syed Farid Alatas, "Islam and Modernization," in *Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social and Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century*, ed. K.S. Nathan and Mohammad Hashim Kamali (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), 209-30.
[13] Gakahu and Mukhongo, "'Women's Pages' in Kenya's Newspapers"; Barker-Plummer, "News and Feminism"; Barker-Plummer, "News as a Political Resource."

at serious political issues, but also looking at the "fluff", such as the advertorial-style articles on luxury consumption, this thesis gives a complex picture of the ways in which women were depicted and the tensions at play in women's lives, and how these evolved over the period in question.

Thus, this research contributes to our understanding of gender and the media in a context outside that of the West. I have shown how the women's pages provided a professional space for women journalists that allowed them more freedom than existed in other parts of the papers. Given the research to date that has shown how women journalists are frequently frustrated in their career paths, these comparisons lay the foundation for developing strategies to help improve the representation of women in the media.[14]

Limitations of the research

While I have discussed some methodological limitations in Chapter Three, here I look at other limitations of this research. Situated across a period that foreshadowed the *Reformasi* movement in Malaysia, possibly the most important ongoing movement for change since the movement for independence in Malaya, this thesis was being written while the repercussions of this movement were still being felt. How the women's pages contributed to these changes is beyond the scope of this thesis, but the thesis was inevitably influenced by these subsequent developments, both in how I approached the respondents and the content and how they responded to me and my research.

A major constraint of the methodology, due to both time and space constraints, is that I have not engaged with consumers of news, to see how their perceptions of the news and of themselves as Malay-Muslim women and readers of these papers evolved over time. This focus on the newsroom has come under criticism for instance by Karin Wahl-Jorgensen et al in their study of audience and journalists' perception of user-generated content, arguing that it reinforces a top-down perspective of the news and the value of the news.[15] While narrowing the focus of potential research questions is one of the constraints of a project such as this thesis, it would make an interesting avenue for future research, in particular comparing and contrasting the "encoder" and "decoder" roles, to use Stuart Hall's terms.[16]

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[14] See e.g. Utari and Nilan, "The Lucky Few."; Cho and Davenport, "Gender Discrimination in Korean Newsrooms"; Haiyan Wang, "'Naked Swimmers': Chinese Women Journalists' Experience of Media Commercialization," *Media, Culture & Society* 38, no. 4 (2016), 489-505.

[15] Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, Andrew Williams, and Claire Wardle, "Audience Views on User-Generated Content: Exploring the Value of News from the Bottom Up," *Northern Lights: Film & media studies yearbook* 8, no. 1 (2010), 177-94.

[16] Hall, "Encoding/ Decoding."

Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated how the women's pages of the Malay-language newspapers in Malaysia, despite being part of an authoritarian media landscape, were able to provide alternatives, though limited, to the malestream, hegemonic construction of "the Malay-Muslim woman". It lays the groundwork for future investigations both into the nature of hegemonic evolution in both authoritarian and democratic institutions; and into the role that women's pages play in the politics of the nation-state, as more than just repositories for "fluff" and fashion.

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Appendix A: Plain Language Statement

"The role of women journalists in Malay-language newsrooms from 1987 to 1998"

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Introduction

You are invited to participate in the above research project. The purpose of the research is to look at the role of women journalists in Malay-language newsrooms. Your depth of experience will provide valuable insights into news values and decision-making. This interview will be part of Ms Randhawa's doctoral thesis at the University of Melbourne and has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee.

What will I be asked to do?

Your involvement comprises an interview and an audio recording. You will be asked questions that form the basis for an open discussion on your experiences in the newsroom between approximately 1987 and 1998. Attached is a list of indicative questions. The time commitment ranges between one to two hours, with possible follow-up sessions. I will seek your permission to record the interview. You can stop the interview at any time. Your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw consent at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied. Later, you will be given a transcript of the interview and the opportunity to make corrections or request deletions.

It is usual in oral history based research to use participants' names. If you wish to remain anonymous, you will be referred to by a pseudonym in the final research. We will also remove any references to information that might allow someone to guess your identity. In this case, your name and personal details will be removed from all records after you have approved the interview transcript, unless you request otherwise for the purpose of receiving ongoing information about the research. Your details will be kept in a separate file, with only Ms Randhawa having access to these details. All data will remain confidential subject to legal limitations.

What will happen to the data collected?

Research results from the data collected will be published as a doctoral thesis. A summary of the findings will be sent to you, if you request it. The results may also be presented at academic conferences, used in journal articles and/ or published as a book for a general audience, and will be kept for a minimum of five years after any publication.

Where can I get further information?

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact any of the researchers via email (see above) or telephone Ms Randhawa on <number supplied>.
If you have any concerns about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, on ph: 8344 2073, or fax: 9347 6739.

How do I agree to participate?

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form.

Appendix B: Brief biographies of oral history respondents (in alphabetical order)

1. **Azlinariah Abdullah** joined *Utusan* in 1995, leaving in 2007. At the time of the interview, she was pursuing a Masters, focusing on Rohingya refugees. She studied communications at the International Islamic University Malaysia (UIAM) prior to joining the newsroom. Her main focus was foreign affairs, though she also wrote articles for the leader page. Interviewed on 9 April 2014, in a café in Bangsar, an affluent suburb and shopping area.

2. **'Damia'** joined *BH* in 1983 and left in 1996, and wanted to remain anonymous. She primarily worked on the women's pages. Interviewed 26 February 2014, in a café in Bangsar.

3. **Fariza Saidin** joined *Utusan* in 1979, retiring in 2007. She studied mass communication at Institut Teknologi Mara (ITM), gaining a diploma. ITM has now become a university, and the diploma is equivalent to the degree now offered. The main focus of her work was entertainment, and she was still active as an entertainment blogger when interviewed. Interviewed on 28 February 2014, in the compound of a condominium, Dutamas.

4. **Jamhariah Jaafar** joined *BH* in 1987, leaving in 2003. She studied journalism at the Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), on a scholarship. Primarily covered sports and politics, and became a civil servant on leaving the newspaper. Interviewed 27 March 2014, in a café in Bangsar.

5. **Maimunah Yusof** joined *Utusan* in 1969, directly from secondary school, and retired in 2000. She worked primarily on the women's pages and related women's magazines published by *Utusan*, and continued publishing her column (*Di celah-celah kehidupan*, Life's nooks and crannies) as a blog after leaving the paper. Interviewed 23 February 2014, in a suburban café in Taman Baru Ampang.

6. **Maizura Mohd Ederis** joined *BH* in 1993, leaving in 1996 to pursue a career in magazine publishing and television production. She studied management technology at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), but joined the media straight out of university. She worked primarily on the women's pages. Interviewed 13 February 2014, in a café in Taman Melawati.

7. **Marhaini Kamarudin**, joined *BH* in 1992, following a degree majoring in writing at Universiti Malaya (UM). She left *BH* in 1994, following a transfer out of state, and joined *Utusan*, where she was working at the time of the interview. She was the first female news editor at *Utusan*. Interviewed 1 April 2014 at the *Utusan* office.

8. **Melati Arieff** joined *Utusan* in 1979, straight from secondary school, however she later completed both a diploma in journalism at ITM (1980-1983) and masters in journalism at Boston University in the United States (1985). She left *Utusan* in 1990, and was working with the national news agency, Bernama, at the time of the interview. Her focus at *Utusan* was on economics. Interviewed on 31 March 2014, at the Bernama office.

9. **Mona Ahmad** joined *BH* in 1997 and was still working there at the time of the interview. She held an undergraduate degree in political science from UIAM, and a masters in media studies and

communication from UM. She worked primarily in general news and foreign affairs, but was working on features at the time of the interview. Interviewed 6 February 2014, at the *BH* office.

10. **Non Einai** joined *Utusan* in 1979, retiring in 2008. She studied geography at UM and primarily worked on the women's pages, though spent a large part of her career as a sub-editor. Interviewed on 12 March 2014, at a food court in Kepong.

11. **Norfatimah Ahmad** joined *BH* in 1994, and was still working there at the time of the interview. She majored in journalism at UiTM. She had spent most of her career on the general desk, with a particular interest in corruption cases. Interviewed 10 March 2014, at the *BH* office.

12. **Norila Daud** joined *Utusan* in 1979, and was still working there at the time of the interview. She held a diploma in journalism from ITM. Spent several years in both sports and courts, and was president of the National Union of Journalists for 12 years, from 1998. Interviewed on 8 February 2014, at the *Utusan* office.

13. **Normala Hamzah** joined *Utusan* in 1974, straight from secondary school, but did a degree in journalism through distance learning with UiTM in 2000. Although retired since 2007, she was still carrying out contract work for the *Utusan* group at the time of the interview. Interviewed on 8 April 2014, in a resort hotel in Bangi.

14. **Nurul Adlina Kamaludin** joined *BH* in 1993, having studied mass communication at ITM. She worked primarily on foreign news until leaving the company in 2008, resigning due to family commitments. Interviewed 17 March 2014, at a restaurant in Pusat Bandar Damansara.

15. **Rosnah Majid** joined *Utusan* in 1976, resigning in 1996. After resigning she was elected to the Kedah state assembly in 1999, for one term. She held a degree in economics from UM, and had been a student activist during her time there. At the time of interview, she was primarily involved in business. She covered economics for most of her career, including writing leader articles. Interviewed 18 February 2014, at a hotel in Kuala Lumpur.

16. **Sa'adah Ismail** joined *Utusan* in 1979, from secondary school, leaving in 1989 to pursue a career in public relations. She primarily covered entertainment. Interviewed 14 March 2014, at a café in Bangsar.

17. **Salbiah Ani** joined *BH* in 1986, and was still working there at the time of the interview. She graduated in journalism from UiTM, and specialised in literature. Interviewed 2 February 2014, *BH* office.

18. **Salina Abdullah** joined *BH* in 1992 and was still working there at the time of the interview. She graduated from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) in chemistry, and covered environmental issues. Interviewed 11 March 2014, at the *BH* office.

19. **Seri Intan Osman** joined *BH* in 1983, having graduated in journalism from UiTM, and was still working there at the time of the interview. She had experience on a number of desks, including a stint as women's editor after the period examined in this thesis. Interviewed 30 January 2014, at the *BH* office.

20. **Zaharani Asran** joined *Utusan* in 1978, after finishing secondary school, until retiring in 2004. She worked primarily on the women's desk. Interviewed 27 February 2014, at a café in Central Market, Kuala Lumpur.

21. '**Zara'** joined *BH* in 1996 and was still working there at the time of the interview, and wanted to remain anonymous. Interviewed 7 February 2014, at the *BH* office.